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The Canterbury Poets.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP.

KEATS.

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF JOHN KEATS. WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY
SKETCH BY JOHN HOGBEN.

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Introductory Sketch.



THE impression the subject of this sketch has made on the world is, in many ways, a deep and notable one. The high value, and the Spring-freshness of his poems ; the harsh treatment he received at the hands of his inferiors ; the unfulfilled, yet devouring, love for the woman of his choice ; the early death in a foreign land—all serve to fill the picture of his life with tenderest light and shadow. One instinctively hushes one's voice while speaking of Keats ; and it is difficult to restrain a certain enthusiasm of generosity which might easily be spent at the expense of judgment. *Promise* touches us as *finished success* can never do ! To the first, the mind gives horizons rich and varied as sunsets—to the latter, the clear light of the definite deed, splendid, it may be, but changeless. In the rush of feeling which guides the endeavour to round off the life which has gone but a little way,

there is a pardonable disposition to stretch the curve backwards, so that it may become part of a larger circle. But perhaps a sphere is too fine a figure to express accurately our broken life, even at its best. We too readily forget—do we not?—the irregularity of life. Our years have an uninterrupted progress which our thought and feeling can never claim. Between the stream's beginning and the sea—in addition to the quick downward flow, the rapids and the cataracts—how many quiet pools there are, with their slowly-gyrating foam-bells; how many stretches of water where motion is so calm that the reflection of the banks scarcely loses any of its delicate pencillings by the movement. In our treatment of those who die young, there is often another failing which “leans to virtue's side”—there is the belief that the few years were all that were necessary to complete the life. There is one sense, and one only, in which any man's life may truly be said to be complete in this world—namely, when Death asserts for us that the trial of his education has issued in the complete certainty that he is fit for a higher—it may be a lower—class than this earth can supply. There is, consequently, more kindness than justice in the thought that has been expressed with great strength as well as beauty by Mrs. Browning when she calls Keats

“The man who never stepped
In gradnal progress like another man,
But turning grandly on his central self,
Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years,

And died, not young—(the life of a long life
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn
For ever).

Keats himself was singularly sensible of the incompleteness of his life and work—in truth, few thoughts weighed more heavily on his aspiring spirit than did this very one ; and while he would, doubtless, have thrilled had it been told him that the Queen of British Poetesses should write such words about him, his fine eyes would have shone with a mild rebuke. Wonderful, beyond measure, are his poems, considered as the result of half a decade (for they were written, mainly, after he had attained his twentieth year) ; and if ever a man's work carried with it into the clear air of history a nimbus, as it were, from the land of marvels and impossible achievements, it was his. In him the marvellous is with us already—to exaggerate is to destroy !

The story of the life is as simple as it is short, yet it is, in more senses than one, intense and rapid. John Keats was born in Finsbury on the 31st of October 1795. Charles Cowden Clarke tells us that "Keats's father was the principal servant at the 'Swan and Hoop' stables—a man of remarkably fine common-sense and native respectability"—who had the good fortune to lift himself up in life by marrying his master's daughter. Leigh Hunt describes Keats's mother as "a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement ;" and Lord Houghton

repeats the opinion of another when he tells us she was tall, having "a large oval face, and a somewhat saturnine demeanour." The seeming difference between these pictures might be accounted for (like so many other so-called inconsistencies) by the discovery of the point of view, and, probably, the relative intimacy of the draughtsmen with the subject of their etchings. Four children were born of the marriage—John, George, Thomas, and Fanny (who still survives at the advanced age of eighty-two). John was a seven months' child, and became an orphan at twelve years of age, having lost his father in 1804, and his mother in 1807. About £8000 were left to be equally divided among the children. The school to which Keats was sent was that kept by his friend Charles Cowden Clarke's father at Enfield, where our hero seems to have distinguished himself chiefly by his fighting capabilities;—we find him even gravely "squaring up" at an usher, who had administered punishment to his brother Tom. It should be mentioned, however, that he managed to carry off all the prizes for English literature. The school library had strong attractions for him, and, even in these days, he showed a strong preference for Greek mythology. In his fourteenth year his guardian had him apprenticed to Mr. Thomas Hammond, a surgeon in Edmon-ton, two miles from Enfield, at a fee of two hundred guineas, besides expenses. Here he would appear to have had more concern about finishing a translation of the "Æneid" he had been

at work upon, than learning his profession, which he disliked, indeed, and which, he told his friend Severn, his guardian had forced upon him "against his will." A copy of the "Faerie Queene," lent him by Clarke, first set his imagination aflame, and in 1812 he made his first attempt at poetry in his "Imitation of Spenser." When Keats came to London to enter St. Thomas's Hospital as a student, he was introduced to Leigh Hunt (with whom he became very intimate) and other literary men, who gave him no small encouragement in his efforts towards poetry—which more and more dominated his mind—finally forcing him to lay down the knife and take up the pen in earnest. In 1817 his first volume was issued. It attracted no attention whatever, and seems to have been read only by his intimates and their friends. And yet there is much promise in the modest little book. Turn its leaves, and let the eye rest where it may, there is something more than Spenserian echoes here. The very first poem has some passages of singular freshness. What an excellently conceived description of the birth of Sound we have, for example, in the line—

"Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."

What more redolent of sweet summer air did Keats ever give us than this—

"Here are sweet peas on tiptoe for a flight ;
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings."

And (a few lines farther on) we come upon his pretty word-picture of the minnows—

“ Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the stream,”

which could scarcely have been *written* in-doors, and can never be *read* there, certainly, without instantly bringing gleams of warm memories of singing brooks which the busy years have failed to crowd out. Who that has watched the birds crossing the fields in wavy lines of motion, breasting the air as they fly upwards on the strength of their latest impetus, can hesitate in calling the single line—in which the poet describes goldfinches flying—a singularly felicitous one?—

“ Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.”

No such perfect touch could be supplied by Peter Bell's twin-brother, to whom a bird was but a flying bird, “and it was nothing more.” Only an eye that takes colour and motion in their married effects could have given us this; for only at the particular “pausing” the wings are still, though spread, and the yellow visible. The double view of life in “Sleep and Poetry,” too, has justly been much admired :—

“ Stop and consider ! life is but a day ;
 A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
 From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep
 While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep

Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan ?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ;
The reading of an ever-changing tale ;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil."

These are but shreds of beauty, and yet Keats himself would pardon a partiality for such, for he confessed once that he himself "looked upon fine *phrases* like a lover." The larger fact also remains that (the necessity for pruning aside) there was the true spontaneity of song in these early efforts. In the poet's own words—

"The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
Into the brain ere one can think upon it ;"

albeit his sonnets were, by-and-by, to exhibit even greater advance than his heroics. A new voice had uttered its first sweet notes, but few, meantime, paused to listen. In reviewing the book in the *Examiner*, Leigh Hunt wrote—"The faults may be comprised in two—first, a tendency to notice everything too indiscriminately, and without an eye to natural proportion and effect ; and second, a sense of the proper variety of versification without a due consideration of its principles"—which was really all a kind critic could say, whose regard for the aftermath was as great as for the truth of his censure. Many a rough hand has ruthlessly pulled up a plant whose first flower was weak, and, it may be, commonplace, but in whose *root* lay potentialities of beauty the following summer may have looked for in vain. There must always be in

the highest criticism an element of that insight which begets prophecy, and so, if need be, modulates dispraise ! The health of Keats had already become somewhat feeble, and his movements were for some time erratic. Residence—now in the Isle of Wight, now at Margate, and now at Leatherhead—removed him from his companions, and as Keats had a large and charming capacity for warm friendships, we have to thank these absences for those delightful letters which were given to the world in 1848 by Lord Houghton, and which almost create for the writer another reputation—separate from his poetical one. When we consider that Keats was at this time only twenty-two years of age, there is surely room for wonder as we peruse these exceedingly clever productions—full as they are of quick turns of thought, lovely bits of description, and flashes of wit ; besides containing as they do some great thoughts gravely expressed in a perfect arrangement of words. All the while he was at work on “*Endymion*”—which was finished at Burford Bridge on the 28th of November 1817, although not published until 1818. Few poems have undergone so much criticism as “*Endymion*,” not merely as regards the abuse with which it was hailed, nor the few milder views which were expressed at the date of publication, but, since then, the world of criticism worthy of the name would seem to have sought specially to make amends for the debts which were due, but not paid in the earlier days. It is enough to say

here, however, that the poem, despite its length and its redundancy of feeling as well as language, has long ago taken its place as one of the chief glories in this century's treasury of poetry. The poem was believed to be marred by diffuseness, not merely by those whose patience was as weak as their judgment. "I think," (wrote even Shelley) "if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger." But the voices, for the most part, that hailed "Endymion" were not content with their want of discrimination but added thereto the most unqualified coarseness. Quoth the *Quarterly*—"He (Keats) is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language. . . . This author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt, but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype." *Blackwood* followed with—"The phrenzy of the 'Poems' was bad enough, in its way, but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy of 'Endymion;'" and continued, "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop, Mr. John, back to plasters, pills, and ointment boxes, etc. But, for heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in

your practice than you have been in your poetry." It is as well to place these words plainly before the reader (words deliberately printed in high class journals, whose conductors have, doubtless, repented long ago in dust and ashes on behalf of their fathers in office), not for the ungracious purpose of exhuming the dead, as specimens of all but obsolete criticism, but that the strength (or weakness, if you will) of the "Article" which Byron, in "Don Juan," Canto II., stanza 59, would have the world believe killed the poet may be measured and found wanting. Lord Jeffrey, on the other hand, in the *Edinburgh* (six years later than his "This will never do," over the "Excursion"), while recognising prominent demerits, said—"We are very much inclined, indeed, to add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm;" while Shelley wrote a letter of remonstrance to the editor of the *Quarterly* (couched in very different terms, it must be confessed, from those hissed through his teeth in the "Adonais")—which, however, was never sent. What of Keats? No doubt he was deeply hurt. He must have *felt* even then what he *said* to his brother in 1819—"My name with the literary fashionables is vulgar; I am a weaver boy to them," and yet Cowden Clarke could say of him, "Had he been born in squalor he would have emerged a gentleman." Byron was wide of his

mark for all that—it was not the “Article” that killed him, as we shall see. It would seem that Shelley shared Byron’s belief on this subject. Keats could at least write in calm and independent spirit—“Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception and ratification of what is fine.” His words to his brother are—“This is a mere matter of the moment. I think I shall be among the English poets after my death.” He made a tour in Scotland and Ireland in July and August of the same year. His friend Charles Armitage Brown accompanied him. Certainly his letters betray nothing like “giving in” on account of the attacks which had been made upon him. Poetry of the ephemeral order (what he expressly called “doggerel”) and descriptions of scenery were sent home in considerable quantities as the pedestrians passed onwards. There can be little doubt Keats over-exerted himself, and his throat at length became so inflamed that he was obliged to leave his companion at Inverness, and return to London. Here, towards the close of the year, his brother Thomas died, after being faithfully nursed by the poet, whose health suffered severely from the anxiety.

The picture of Keats's life need not be large in surface, but—if it is to resemble the original—it must be deep in perspective, and in the farther recess the figure of a fair woman will be found controlling all other outlines and colours. Keats was twenty-three when his first meeting with Fanny Brawne (afterwards Mrs. Lindon) took place in October or November 1818. Even a comparatively careless reader of the poems which had by this time seen the light could scarcely fail to detect that the spirit which conceived them had already prefigured its own ripening needs, and that *Woman* must inevitably touch such an one to finer, if sadder, issues. Hitherto Keats seems to have kept himself wonderfully free from the grip of—if not the dalliance with—love, his three sonnets on woman notwithstanding! Not so long before the meeting took place he had written, "Nothing strikes me so forcibly with a sense of the ridiculous as love. A man in love, I do think, cuts the sorryest figure in the world. Even when I know a poor fool to be really in pain about it, I could burst out laughing in his face. His pathetic visage becomes irresistible;" a thought which tickled his fancy so much that he threw his impressions into a farce of a rhyme which he called "A party of Lovers." But in another letter he writes—"The voice and shape of a woman has haunted me these three days," which is not to be identified with Fanny Brawne (as Lord Houghton believed), but with Miss Cox, the cousin of Keats's friend, J. H.

Reynolds, as proved by Mr. F. Buxton Forman—whose whole-hearted care and discrimination has made his superb edition of the poet's works a complete repository on this and other questions. Keats was, however, sufficient master of himself to write nearly a year later—"I feel every confidence that if I choose I may be a popular writer! That I will never be. I equally dislike the favour of the public with the love of a woman. They are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence." Nor did example do more for him in these days. Writing to his brother George, who had emigrated to America, taking with him a young wife in whose love he professed to have happiness great enough to allow of his advising his brother to marry, the poet ungallantly retorts—"Notwithstanding your happiness and your recommendations, I hope I shall never marry, though the most beautiful creature were waiting for me at the end of a journey or a walk! Though the carpet were of silk, and the curtains of the morning clouds, the chairs and sofas stuffed with cygnets' down, the food manna, the wine beyond claret, the window opening on Winandermere, I should not feel, or rather my happiness should not be so fine; my solitude is sublime," and so on. Ah, how gladly would he have married the woman he loved without any of these things, when his own time came—as come it did, bringing with it a fervency that consumed his frail body. He did not forget how he had ridiculed the lover, for in the very first published letter to Fanny

Brawne he writes—"I would not have you see those rhapsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to, and which I have often laughed at in another." This very letter, by the way, was sold to Mr. Oscar Wilde on 2nd January 1885, for no less a sum than £18; another of the letters, however, fetched more than double that price. What would poor Keats have said to these figures, and even to the publication of his letters; and yet he *did* say playfully to his sweetheart—"Our correspondence at some future time I propose offering to Murray"—if not, Reeves and Turner. But now, that which Keats had ridiculed was to be repeated in himself. All his *words* flew off ashamed of themselves, and his life henceforth became absorbed in the life of another. To change the pronoun is all that is necessary in the very beautiful description of Elaines' love for Lancelot—

"He lifted up his eyes,
And loved her with that love which was his doom."

His *doom*, literally; for while it is difficult to believe he could have ultimately escaped the disease of which he died, it is impossible to doubt that the strength of his love hastened his going. When the aged Severn received Keats's published letters to Fanny Brawne, he sent the editor of the volume a letter (dated 5th February 1878) in which these words occur—"The thirty-seven letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne I have read with great pain, inasmuch as from them

I now understand *for the first time* the sufferings and death of the poet. He did not confide to me this serious passion, and it now seems to me *but for this cause he might have lived many years*. I can now understand his want of courage to speak, as it was consuming him in body and mind." These words present, it seems to me, a more truthful view of the death than that which Byron and Shelley adopted (for whom less of the curtain had been drawn aside, it is true) in judging his heart vulnerable to any blunt arrow of criticism. One need not deny Keats's sensitiveness in this respect, while emphasising his independence of spirit, and he assuredly had fighting propensities, which he might have found refuge in. If he had not the duck's back for the bitter waters of unmerited censure, he had, at least, the swan's wing wherewith to punish the offender; and had he inherited a robust, instead of a consumptive, bodily frame, there is evidence that he would have rallied from the strokes he received, and smitten his foe (like "The Pythian of the Age"); or, what would have been still better, in the dignity of his soul he would have fulfilled his own purposes, leaving the verdict with the kindlier years to come. The death of Keats has attracted ten times more interest than his life, and, in view of all that has been written on the subject, surely no apology will be demanded for lingering over it in connection with the mention of Fanny Brawne's name; for although Love and Death seemed to wrestle for

possession of him, it was, after all, only a *seeming antagonism*—they pulled in one direction!

But to return to the poet's life in 1818. He was now living with his kind friend Brown in Wentworth Place, Hampstead, and the lady of his love lived in the next house. "Hyperion" had been begun in the winter of this year; the "Eve of St. Agnes" was written in January 1819; the Odes to "Psyche" and "To the Nightingale" were composed in April and May; "Otho the Great" (which was written conjointly by Keats and Brown) was finished in August; "Hyperion" abandoned as it now stands, "Lamia" finished, and "To Autumn" written in September. But although his poems flowed from him, he felt harassed about his worldly affairs. Poetry had been to him, as to Coleridge, "its own exceeding great reward;" but the ways and means of sustaining the commoner life we all share with him were difficult to find, and he was now beginning to learn by experience the truth of his own words, which have been quoted, that the wings of his independence were being "cloyed" by his love, and his desire for marriage. In 1819 he resolved to work for periodicals, in which some of his shorter poems appeared separately. His health, however, was meantime precarious, for we find him writing to his sister, in December 1819—"I am fearful lest the weather should affect my throat, which on exertion or cold continually threatens me." The beginning of the end may be told in Lord Houghton's well-known words—"One night (3rd

February 1820), about eleven o'clock, Keats returned home in a state of strange physical excitement—it might have appeared to those who did not know him, one of fierce intoxication. He told his friend he had been outside the stage-coach, had received a severe chill, was a little fevered, but added, 'I don't feel it now.' He was easily persuaded to go to bed, and as he leapt into the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and said, 'That is blood from my mouth ; bring me a candle ; let me see this blood.' He gazed steadfastly for some moments at the ruddy stain, and then, looking in his friend's face with an expression of sudden calmness never to be forgotten, said, 'I know the colour of that blood—it is arterial blood—I cannot be deceived in that colour ; that drop is my death-warrant ; I must die !'”

Coleridge tells us, in his *Table Talk*, that years before this he met Keats in a lane near Highgate, where he says—“He was introduced to me, and stayed a minute or so. After he had left us a little way, he came back, and said, 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand !' There is death in that hand, I said to —, when Keats was gone ; yet this was, I believe, before the consumption showed itself distinctly.” He seemed to rally for a little during the summer, but the end was near. Early in July 1820 his third volume was published, containing “*Lamia*,” “*Isabella*,” and other poems. It was a copy of this book that was found on the body of Shelley when

the bay of Spezzia gave up that rich instalment of its dead. It was now regarded as fixed in the minds of all his friends that if Keats was to run the faintest chance of recovery, it could only be under milder skies. "I am afraid," writes he to his friend Haydon, "I shall pop off just when my mind is able to run alone." How pathetic these words are! How full, also, of that deliberate self-respect (so far from mere self-conceit) which emphasises the value of mind as a gift—making it, as it were, the very basis and justification of life itself. Shelley invited the poet to live with him at Pisa, admitting in a letter to Hunt, "I am aware, indeed, in part, that I am nourishing a rival who will far surpass me;" and generously adding, "and this is an additional motive, and will be an added pleasure." But Keats declined. Joseph Severn—the artist whose name is indissolubly linked with that of John Keats—had known the poet since 1813; and the labour of love he undertook when he sailed in September 1820 with his invalid friend—praised to the echo as it has been—it would be difficult, indeed, to overvalue. "I am not a little proud of Keats as my friend," said Severn, after the poet's death; and Keats had every reason to be proud of his friend Severn; as no doubt he who expressly placed *fine doing* above *fine writing* (*vide* Letter to J. H. Reynold, 25th August 1819) could not fail to be. Kindest wishes went with him. Leigh Hunt published in the *Indicator* a little affectionate farewell, in which he said—"Thou shalt return with thy friend the

nightingale, and make all thy other friends happy with thy voice, as they are sorrowful to miss it. The little cage thou didst sometime share with us looks as deficient without thee as thy present one may do without us ; but, farewell for a while—thy heart is in our fields, and thou wilt soon be back to rejoin it.” It was otherwise arranged. The voyagers encountered a storm of some violence in the Bay of Biscay. “What awful music !” cried Severn—as the waves thundered against the reeling vessel and leapt on board, inundating the cabin. “Yes,” said Keats—thinking of another parting—“water parted from the sea !” Had he not but newly written—“The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing ?” From Naples came these words—which seem in their connection to have been wrung from him almost against his will—“The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God ! God ! God ! . . . If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. . . . It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery.” The friends were now in Rome. In the very last letter he wrote he said—“I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence.” His very last written words

are these, to his friend Brown (with a sparkle of sad fun in them)—“I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow. God bless you!” For a time hope rose and fell. Kind hands were about him. The best of medical advice was his, in the person of Sir James Clark. Suddenly he grew worse, and, vomiting much blood, was left with spent strength and wild intellect. “How,” asked his devoted friend Severn, “can he be Keats again after all this?” Severn’s faithfulness had led him into great anxieties and difficulties, but he never flagged in his self-sacrifice. Nothing was too menial for him to do. He took his turn at fire-kindling, cooking, sweeping the room—all of which might have been done, of course, by others, but not at such suitable times as love alone would choose. To crown all, funds were low, and the brave fellow cried in his despair—“If I could leave Keats every day for a time, I could soon raise money by my painting; but he will not let me out of his sight.” His watch was not to last much longer, however. On the 14th of February Keats told Severn that he wished the words—

“Here lies one whose name was writ in water,”

to be placed on his grave. At another time he said “I feel the flowers growing over me.” He had already told Severn that he thought the intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the growth of flowers. The picture is a touching one indeed!—The dim light of

the sick room—the hushed footsteps of Severn as he moves about on his errands of mercy—the pale spectre face of the poet asleep. Severn's letters are by no means faultless literary compositions, but who would not love him for feeling and writing as he did five days before Death came, and this at least is exquisitely told, "done to the quick," as the late Dr. John Brown used to say:—"Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies."

The end came on the 23rd of February 1821. "About four," writes Severn, "the approaches of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come!' I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sunk into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept." Three days later the body was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, whither little more than a year afterwards the ashes of Shelley were also conveyed.

The portraits of Keats vary considerably. In the absence of any of these, perhaps the best picture in words is given by Leigh Hunt—"He was under the middle height; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat

and well turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size ; he had a face in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up, an eager power checked and made patient by ill-health. Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity. His face was rather long than otherwise ; the upper lip projected a little over the under ; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken ; the eyes mellow and glowing, large, dark, and sensitive. . . . His hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets."

Shelley said that "in spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, nor ever will be, a popular poet." Perhaps so. Yet edition after edition of his poems—in one form or another—sees the light, any scrap of information as to the man is eagerly laid hold of, and there is the abiding—because growing—interest in all that he has left us. The poet of the million he may never be, but he has the outstanding merit of well-defined originality : he is Keats through and through, and it is not too much to say that his influence has coloured, more or less, the best English poetry that the years have brought since he left us. Few men have been more self-sufficient in the higher—if not the highest—sense of the word. "Give me health and a day, and I will make ridiculous the pomp of emperors" he might have said as well as Emerson. Hear

him—"It appears to me that almost any man may, like the spider, spin from his own inwards, his own airy citadel. The points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine web of his soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean—full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury." There is a proud precision in his words sometimes—"I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the principle of Beauty, and the memory of Great Men." Strength, too, there is in him—with which the thrilling sensitiveness of his nature did not quarrel. "I would jump down Etna for any great public good, but I hate a mawkish popularity," he once wrote to a friend. One great charm in his poems is that we come upon his best things, to use his own expression "with a fine suddenness," like the notes of a redbreast when the leaves are few and wizened. No single saying of his seems to let in so much light upon the man as this—"O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" He felt—and spoke. He wrote with great rapidity, but like Burns his motto would seem to have been "easy composition—laborious correction." "The marvellous is the most enticing," he once acknowledged to his publisher, and surely it seemed to come to him with an easy naturalness.

so to speak, as though he breathed the rarer atmosphere with greater freedom ; for it has truly enough been said of him, " He never beheld an oak without seeing the dryad." He *lived* in his imagination no less than *wrote*, and to know Keats is to allow that he spoke the truth when he even went the length of saying, " I feel I can bear *real* ills better than *imaginary*." We naturally think of one red-letter exception among the real ills of his life—but perhaps only one ! Yet with what true discrimination, after all, he relegates a high place to *real* difficulties—" I must think that difficulties nerve the spirit of a man : they make our Prime Objects a Refuge as well as a Passion." What compression of truth is here ! Keats's definition of poetry is a singularly good description of what we meet with in his own poems—" Might, half slumbering on its own right arm"—a very beautiful and comprehensive line, expressing the union of rest and strength. There is everywhere abundant evidence of a life which sees and feels that which may not be told in common terms, and of the work of a wonderfully susceptible spirit accustomed to put forth the most delicate antennæ—thus searching for and finding food in realms distinctly foreign to most of the merely intellectual searchers. How fond he is of such expressions as " A little noiseless noise among the leaves ;" " Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter ;" " There is a triple sight in blindness keen." These all partake of seeming paradox, and require the

higher altitude of vision to give them clearness and truth. They are in touch, so to speak, with a sense within the sense. *Intension*, with few exceptions—of which Keats was certainly not one—limits *extension*. The wide, still reservoir, fed by runlets of history, politics, science, philosophy, and religion, as well as by the up-wellings of imagination—which may be regarded as a picture of the poetry we associate with the name of Tennyson, or perhaps more fitly still, of Browning—we look for vainly in Keats. With him, literally—

“ The silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandits' den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires.”

His attitude towards knowledge has often been copied, but can never be justified. In “*Lamia*” he asks—

“ Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven ;
We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.”

Three years before “*Lamia*” was published, Haydon tells us that Keats and Lamb agreed that “*Newton* had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours.” Again, in his criticism “*On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearian Actor*,” we find Keats complaining that “the rain-

how is robbed of its mystery ;" and the life he sighs for as late as two years before his death is quite in keeping—

“ O, for an age so sheltered from annoy,
That I may never know *how* change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense !”

It is not “*when* change the moons,” mark—that would ever be a source of interest and delight to him—but *how*, it pained him to consider, for he knew that the knowledge destroyed that indefinite charm around which his imagination loved to play. This desire to keep things at a distance, so as to preserve the mystery, has been given great prominence to in Keats, and a careful reader will find it underlying very various forms of speech. But it is madness to speak as though Keats had found his highest life or expression. To be as we find him at twenty-five years of age is mystery enough. God did not give him “the years that bring the philosophic mind.” Many of his admirers probably prefer him as he is. I am not one of those who do. There were signs of a coming change when he left us and passed onward. As it is, we think of him, as of Schubert, as of one who is so great at so early an age, that the imagination shrinks from the task of attempting to depict what the added years might have made him. Surely the day would have come when the joy which depends on the *outward* mystery should have passed on its *inward* course, keeping the charm as perennial as may be, by

permitting a growing reverence to go hand-in hand with a widening intelligence. Wherever there is mystery there may be poetry, and mystery is found in the very heart of science itself. George Eliot said—"To me the explanations of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lives *under* the processes." (*Life*, vol. II., p. 148.)

To many, indeed, Keats will remain unsatisfying. But let it not be forgotten that he himself had only a moderate view of the mission of the poet, for he sings—

" And they shall be accounted poet-kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things."

He left duty unpreached, although, it may be, not undone. Religion, unless in certain pictorial aspects, took little hold of him, and his sonnet on Ben Nevis (which the late Mr. Dante Rossetti describes as "perhaps his most thoughtful") is, it is true, a sorry enough creed for any man to believe in. To Carlyle, for instance, he appeared to be "dead dog;" and all that unsurpassed richness of colour; that fine instinct which led him to the best—sometimes the *only*—word; that quick perception of what is rare in nature and art; that luxury of sensation which helps us to see the *new* treasures we have in *old* things—all these cardinal literary virtues and magic arts were passed by unheeded—they were not what the Sage sought. It is quite true a man will not go to Keats in his graver hours,

when ease of heart is less sought than healing ; yet surely the better way lies in acknowledging, with Robert Browning, that—

“ Weakness never need be falseness ; truth is truth in
each degree,
Thunder-pealed by God to Nature, whispered by
my soul to me.”

This, at least, is certain, that of all

“ The inheritors of unfulfilled renown,”

no one is more securely fixed in his place than Keats. View him as we may, as Shelley sings of him in his magnificent elegy—

“ He wakes, or sleeps, with the enduring dead.”

JOHN HOGBEN.





Poetical Works of Keats.

EARLY POEMS.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

“What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?”

SPENSER—*Fate of the Butterfly.*

GLORY and Loveliness have passed away ;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathèd incense do we see upborne
Into the east, to meet the smiling day :
No crowd of nymphs, soft voiced, and young, and gay
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please,
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

I STOOD TIPTOE.

“Places of nestling green for Poets made.”—*Story of Rimini.*

I STOOD tiptoe upon a little hill,
 The air was cooling, and so very still,
 That the sweet buds which, with a modest pride,
 Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
 Their scanty leaved and finely tapering stems,
 Had not yet lost those starry diadems
 Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
 The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
 And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept
 On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
 A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
 Born of the very sigh that silence heaves :
 For not the faintest motion could be seen
 Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
 There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
 To peer about upon variety ;
 For round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
 And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim ;
 To picture out the quaint and curious bending
 Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending ;
 Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
 Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.
 I gazed awhile, and felt as light and free
 As though the fanning wings of Mercury
 Had played upon my heels : I was light-hearted,
 And many pleasures to my vision started ;
 So I straightway began to pluck a posy
 Of luxuries bright, milky, soft, and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them ;
 Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them !

And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool, and green ; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtined,
And elumps of woodbine taking the soft wiud
Upon their summer thrones ; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots :
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters,
The spreading bluebells : it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and, scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds !
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises shall be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung ;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses ;
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tiptoe for a flight :
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :
They will be found softer than ringdoves' cooings.

How silent comes the water round that bend !
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging shallows : blades of grass
Slowly across the chequered shadows pass.
Why, you might read two sonnets ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshuesses aye preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Tempered with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand !
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain ;
But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the emerald tresses ;
And while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live ;
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches ; little space they stop ;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak :
Or perhaps, to show their black and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

Were I in such a place, I sure should pray
That nought less sweet might call my thoughts away
Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down ;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Patting against the sorrel as she goes.
How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught
Playing in all her innocence of thought.
O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look ;
O let me for one moment touch her wrist ;
Let me one moment to her breathing list ;
And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburn.
What next ? A tuft of evening primroses,
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes ;
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
Of buds into ripe flowers ; or by the flitting
Of divers moths, that aye their rest are quitting ;
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light.
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers ;
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew, and tumbling streams,
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering !
Thee must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light ?

In the calm grandeur of a sober line
We see the waving of the mountain pine ;
And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade :
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings :
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases ;
O'erhead we see the jasmine and sweetbriar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire ;
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
Charms us at once away from all our troubles :
So that we feel uplifted from the world,
Walking upon the white clouds wreathed and curled.
So felt he, who first told how Psyche went
On the smooth wind to worlds of wonderment ;
What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
First touched ; what amorous and fondling nips
They gave each other's cheeks ; with all their sighs,
And how they kissed each other's tremulous eyes :
The silver lamp—the ravishment—the wonder—
The darkness—the loneliness—the fearful thunder ;
Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.
So did he feel, who pulled the boughs aside,
That we might look into a forest wide,
To catch a glimpse of Fauns, and Dryades,
Coming with softest rustle through the trees ;
And garlands woven of flowers, wild and sweet,
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet :
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph—poor Pan—how he did weep to find
Naught but a lovely sighing of the wind

Along the reedy stream ! a half heard strain,
Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing
Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring ?
In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round :
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool
The blue sky, here and there serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness :
Deaf to light Zephyrus, it would not move ;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot ;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew
That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,
That eye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight ? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing
From out the middle air, from flowery nests,
And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars.
Ah ! surely he had burst our mortal bars ;
Into some wondrous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion !

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmos' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below ;
And brought in faintness, solemn, sweet, and slow,
A hymn from Dian's temple ! while upswelling,
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate :
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air ; thou most lovely queen
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen !
As thou exceedest all things in thy shine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.
O for three words of honey, that I might
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night !

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,
Phœbus awhile delayed his mighty wheels,
And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes,
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize.
The evening weather was so bright and clear,
That men of health were of unusual cheer ;
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal ;
And lovely women were as fair and warm
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.
The breezes were ethereal and pure,
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure
The languid sick ; it cooled their fevered sleep,
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.

Soon they awoke clear-eyed : nor burnt with thirsting,
 Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting :
 And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight
 Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight ;
 Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
 And on their placid foreheads part the hair.
 Young men and maidens at each other gazed
 With hands held back, and motionless, amazed
 To see the brightness in each other's eyes ;
 And so they stood, filled with a sweet surprise,
 Until their tongues were loosed in poesy.
 Therefore no lover did of anguish die :
 But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
 Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
 Cynthia ! I cannot tell the greater blisses
 That followed thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses :
 Was there a Poet born ?—but now no more—
 My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.

TO ———.

HADST thou lived in days of old,
 O what wonders had been told
 Of thy lively countenance,
 And thy humid eyes, that dance
 In the midst of their own brightness ;
 In the very fane of lightness.
 Over which thine eyebrows, leaning,
 Picture out each lovely meaning :
 In a dainty bend they lie,
 Like to streaks across the sky,

Or the feathers from a crow,
Fallen on a bed of snow.
Of thy dark hair, that extends
Into many graceful bends :
As the leaves of Hellebore
Turn to whence they sprung before,
And behind each ample curl
Peeps the richness of a pearl.
Downward too flows many a tress
With a glossy waviness ;
Full and round, like globes that rise
From the censer to the skies
Through sunny air. Add, too, the sweetness
Of thy honeyed voice ; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turned :
With those beauties, scarce discerned,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry.
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave ;
Like twin water-lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breathèd then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage higher
Than twin-sister of Thalia ?
At least for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four.
Hadst thou lived when chivalry
Lifted up her lance on high,
Tell me what thou wouldst have been ?
Ah ! I see the silver sheen

Of thy broidered, floating vest
Covering half thine ivory breast ;
Which, O heavens ! I should see
But that cruel destiny
Has placed a golden cuirass there ;
Keeping secret what is fair.
Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested
Thy locks in knightly casque are rested,
O'er which bend four milky plumes
Like the gentle lily's blooms
Springing from a costly vase.
See with what a stately pace
Comes thine alabaster steed ;
Servant of heroic deed !
O'er his loins his trappings glow
Like the northern lights on snow.
Mount his back, thy sword unsheath !
Sign of the enchanter's death ;
Bane of every wicked spell ;
Silencer of dragon's yell.
Alas ! thou this wilt never do :
Thou art an enchantress too,
And wilt surely never spill
Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

NOW Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touched a verdant hill ;
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill ;

Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
 And after parting beds of simple flowers,
 By many streams a little lake did fill,
 Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
 And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright
 Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below ;
 Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light
 Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow ;
 There saw the swan his neck of archèd snow,
 And oared himself along with majesty ;
 Sparkled his jetty eyes ; his feet did show
 Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
 And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah ! could I tell the wonders of an isle
 That in that fairest lake had placèd been,
 I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile ;
 Or rob from agèd Lear his bitter teen :
 For sure so fair a place was never seen,
 Of all that ever charmed romantic eye :
 It seemed an emerald in the silver sheen
 Of the bright waters ! or, as when on high, [sky.
 Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the cœrulean

And all around it dipped luxuriously
 Sloping of verdure through the glossy tide,
 Which, as it were in gentle amity,
 Rippled delighted up the flowery side ;
 As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,
 Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem !
 Haply it was the workings of its pride,
 In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
 Outviewing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

WOMAN! WHEN I BEHOLD THEE.

WOMAN! when I behold thee flippant, vain,
Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of
fancies ;

Without that modest softening that enhances
The downcast eye, repentant of the pain
That its mild light creates to heal again :

E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances,
E'en then my soul with exultation dances
For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain :
But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender,
Heavens ! how desperately do I adore
Thy winning graces ; to be thy defender
I hotly burn—to be a Calidore—
A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander—
Might I be loved by thee like these of yore !

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair ;
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy
breast,
Are things on which the dazzled senses rest
Till the fond, fixèd eyes forget they stare.
From such fine pictures, heavens ! I cannot dare
To turn my admiration, though unpossessed
They be of what is worthy—though not drest
In lovely modesty, and virtues rare.
Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark ;
These lures I straight forget—e'en ere I dine,
Or thrice my palate moisten : but when I mark
Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
My ear is open like a greedy shark,
To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being?
 Who can forget her half retiring sweets?
 God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
 For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing,
 Who joys to see us with His gifts agreeing,
 Will never give him pinions, who entreats
 Such innocence to ruin—who vilely cheats
 A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing
 One's thoughts from such a beauty; when I hear
 A lay that once I saw her hand awake,
 Her form seems floating palpable, and near;
 Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take
 A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear,
 And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake.

SLEEP AND POETRY.

“As I lay in my bed slepe full unmete
 Was unto me, but why that I ne might
 Rest I ne wist, for there n'as erthly wight
 [As I suppose] had more of hertis ese
 Than I, for I n'ad sicknesse nor dise.”

—Chaucer.

WHAT is more gentle than a wind in summer?
 What is more soothing than the pretty
 hummer,
 That stays one moment in an open flower,
 And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?
 What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
 In a green Island, far from all men's knowing?
 More healthful than the leafiness of dales?
 More secret than a nest of nightingales?

More serene than Cordelia's countenance ?
 More full of visions than a high romance ?
 What, but thee, Sleep ? Soft closer of our eyes !
 Low murmurer of tender lullabies !
 Light hoverer around our happy pillows !
 Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows !
 Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses !
 Most happy listener ! when the morning blesses
 Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes
 That glance so brightly at the new sunrise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee ?
 Fresher than berries of a mountain tree ? [regal,
 More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more
 Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen
 eagle ?

What is it ? And to what shall I compare it ?
 It has a glory, and naught else can share it :
 The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy,
 Chasing away all worldliness and folly ;
 Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
 Or the low rumblings earth's regions under ;
 And sometimes like a gentle whispering
 Of all the secrets of some wondrous thing
 That breathes about us in the vacant air ;
 So that we look around with prying stare,
 Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning,
 And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning ;
 To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,
 That is to crown our name when life is ended.
 Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,
 And from the heart upsprings, rejoice ! rejoice !
 Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things.
 And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen,
 And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
 For his great Maker's presence, but must know
 What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow :
 Therefore no insult will I give his spirit,
 By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy ! for thee I hold my pen
 That am not yet a glorious denizen
 Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel
 Upon some mountain-top until I feel
 A glowing splendour round about me hung,
 And echo back the voice of thine own tongue ?
 O Poesy ! for thee I grasp my pen
 That am not yet a glorious denizen
 Of thy wide heaven ; yet, to my ardent prayer,
 Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,
 Smoothed for intoxication by the breath
 Of flowering bays, that I may die a death
 Of luxury, and my young spirit follow
 The morning sunbeams to the great Apollo,
 Like a fresh sacrifice ; or if I can bear
 The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair
 Visions of all places : a bowery nook
 Will be elysium—an eternal book,
 Whence I may copy many a lovely saying
 About the leaves and flowers—about the playing
 Of nymphs in woods and fountains ; and the shade
 Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid ;
 And many a verse from so strange influence,
 That we must ever wonder how and whence
 It came. Also imaginings will hover
 Round my fireside, and haply there discover
 Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander

In happy silence, like the clear meander
Through its lone vales ; and where I found a spot
Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot,
Or a green hill o'erspread with chequered dress
Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness,
Write on my tablets all that was permitted,
All that was for our human senses fitted.
Then the events of this wide world I'd seize
Like a strong giant, and my spirit tease,
Till at its shoulders it should proudly see
Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider ! life is but a day ;
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep,
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan ?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ;
The reading of an ever-changing tale ;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil ;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;
A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy ; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.
Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First, the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan : sleep in the grass,
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees ;
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces—

Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
As hard as lips can make it : till agreed,
A lovely tale of human life we'll read.
And one will teach a tame dove how it best
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest ;
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees :
Another will entice me on, and on,
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon ;
Till in the bosom of a leafy world
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurled
In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts : for lo ! I see afar,
O'er-sailing the blue cragginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear :
And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge ; and now with sprightly
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide ;
And now I see them on a green hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
The charioteer with wondrous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains ; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
Passing along before a dusky space

Made by some mighty oaks : as they would chase
Some ever-fleeting music, on they sweep.
Lo ! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep :
Some with upholden hand and mouth severe ;
Some with their faces muffled to the ear
Between their arms ; some, clear in youthful bloom,
Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom ;
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze ;
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls ;
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent
The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
And seems to listen : O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
Into the light heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness : but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went.

Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old ? prepare her steeds,
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds ? Has she not shown us all ?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding ? From the meaning
Of Jove's large eyebrow, to the tender greening

Of April meadows? Here her altar shone,
 E'en in this isle; and who could paragon
 The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
 Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
 Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
 Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
 Eternally round a dizzy void?
 Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloyed
 With honours; nor had any other care
 Than to sing out and soothe their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism,
 Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
 Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
 Men were thought wise who could not understand
 His glories: with a puling infant's force
 They swayed about upon a rocking-horse,
 And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal souled!
 The winds of heaven blew, the ocean rolled
 Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
 Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
 Of summer nights collected still to make
 The morning precious: beauty was awake!
 Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
 To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
 To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
 And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
 Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
 Till like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
 Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
 A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
 Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
 That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
 And did not know it—no, they went about,

Holding a poor, decrepit standard out,
 Marked with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
 The name of one Boileau !

O ye whose charge
 It is to hover round our pleasant hills !
 Whose congregated majesty so fills
 My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
 Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,
 So near those common folk ; did not their shames
 Affright you ? Did our old lamenting Thames
 Delight you ? Did ye never cluster round
 Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
 And weep ? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
 To regions where no more the laurel grew ?
 Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
 To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
 Their youth away, and die ? 'Twas even so :
 But let me think away those times of woe :
 Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed
 Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed
 Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard
 In many places—some has been upstirred
 From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
 By a swan's ebon bill ; from a thick brake,
 Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
 Bubbles a pipe ; fine sounds are floating wild
 About the earth : happy are ye and glad.

These things are, doubtless : yet in truth we've had
 Strange thunders from the potency of song ;
 Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,
 From majesty : but in clear truth the themes
 Are ugly cubs, the Poet's Polyphemes

Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower
Of light is poesy ; 'tis the supreme of power ;
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.
The very archings of her eyelids charm
A thousand willing agents to obey,
And still she governs with the mildest sway :
But strength alone, though of the Muses born,
Is like a fallen angel : trees uptorn,
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres
Delight it ; for it feeds upon the burrs
And thorns of life ; forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice : a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever-sprouting green.
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,
Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
Nibble the little cupped flowers, and sing.
Then let us clear away the choking thorns
From round its gentle stem ; let the young fawns,
Yeaned in after times, when we are flown,
Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown
With simple flowers : let there nothing be
More boisterous than a lover's bended knee ;
Naught more ungentle than the placid look
Of one who leans upon a closed book ;
Naught more untranquil than the grassy slopes
Between two hills. All hail, delightful hopes !
As she was wont, th' imagination
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,

And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously
Have spoken ? that from hastening disgrace
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face ?
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow
Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach it ? How
If I do hide myself, it sure shall be
In the very fane, the light of Poesy :
If I do fall, at least I will be laid
Beneath the silence of a poplar shade ;
And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven ;
And there shall be a kind memorial graven.
But off, Despondence ! miserable bane !
They should not know thee, who, athirst to gain
A noble end, are thirsty every hour.
What though I am not wealthy in the dower
Of spanning wisdom ; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
Of man : though no great minist'ring reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving : yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty ; thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear
As anything most true ; as that the year
Is made of the four seasons—manifest
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,
Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I
Be but the essence of deformity,
A coward, did my very eyelids wink

At speaking out what I have dared to think.
 Ah ! rather let me like a madman run
 Over some precipice ; let the hot sun
 Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down
 Convulsed and headlong ! Stay ! an inward frown
 Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
 An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,
 Spreads awfully before me. How much toil !
 How many days ! what desperate turmoil !
 Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
 Ah, what a task ! upon my bended knees,
 I could unsay those—no, impossible !
 Impossible !

For sweet relief I'll dwell
 On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay
 Begun in gentleness die so away.
 E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades :
 I turn full-hearted to the friendly aids
 That smooth the path of honour ; brotherhood,
 And friendliness, the nurse of mutual good.
 The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
 Into the brain ere one can think upon it ;
 The silence when some rhymes are coming out ;
 And when they're come, the very pleasant rout :
 The message certain to be done to-morrow.
 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
 Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
 To eluster round it when we next shall meet.
 Scaree can I scribble on ; for lovely airs
 Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs ;
 Many delights of that glad day recalling,
 When first my senses eought their tender falling.
 And with these airs come forms of elegauce

Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance,
Careless and grand—fingers soft and round
Parting luxuriant curls ; and the swift bound
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushinglly.
Thus I remember all the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers
To trains of peaceful images—the stirr
Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes :
A linnet starting all about the bushes :
A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted
Nestling a rose, convulsed as though it smarted
With over-pleasure—many, many more,
Might I indulge at large in all my store
Of luxuries : yet I must not forget
Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet :
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes
I partly owe to him : and thus, the chimes
Of friendly voices had just given place
To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.
It was a poet's house, who keeps the keys
Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung
The glorious features of the bards who sung
In other ages—cold and sacred busts
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts
To clear Futurity his darling fame !
Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim
At swelling apples with a frisky leap
And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap
Of vine leaves. Then there rose to view a fane
Of liny marble, and thereto a train

Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward :
One, loveliest, holding her right hand toward
The dazzling sunrise : two sisters sweet
Bending their graceful figures till they meet
Over the trippings of a little child :
And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild
Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.
See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ;
A fold of lawnly mantle dabbling swims
At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean
Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er
Its rocky marge, and balances once more
The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam
Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there, half smiling down
At nothing ; just as though the earnest frown
Of over-thinking had that moment gone
From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
As if he always listened to the sighs
Of the goaded world ; and Kosciusko's, worn
By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.

Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,
Starts at the sight of Laura ; nor can wean
His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they !
For over them was seen a free display
Of outspread wings, and from between them shone
The face of Poesy : from off her throne

She overlooked things that I scarce could tell.
The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof : but more than that, there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast ; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night ;
And up I rose refreshed, and glad, and gay,
Resolving to begin that very day
These lines ; and howsoever they be done,
I leave them as a father does his son.





ENDYMION: A POETIC ROMANCE.

“The stretchèd metre of an antique song.”

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS
CHATTERTON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good; it will not—the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away; a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment; but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it; he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not

written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms, of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness; for I wish to try once more before I bid it farewell.

Teignmouth, 10th April, 1818.

BOOK I.

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever :
 Its loveliness increases ; it will never
 Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
 Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
 Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
 Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
 For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils,
 With the green world they live in ; and clear rills

That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour ; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys : so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests ; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.

Many and many a verse I hope to write,
 Before the daisies, vermeil-rimmed and white,
 Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
 Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
 I must be near the middle of my story.
 O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
 See it half finished : but let Autumn bold,
 With universal tinge of sober gold,
 Be all about me when I make an end.
 And now at once, adventuresome, I send
 My herald thought into a wilderness :
 There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
 Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
 A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed
 So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
 Into o'erhanging boughs, and precious fruits.
 And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
 Where no man went ; and if from shepherd's keep
 A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,
 Never again saw he the happy pens
 Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
 Over the hills at every nightfall went.
 Among the shepherds 'twas believèd ever,
 That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
 From the white flock, but passed unworried
 By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,
 Until it came to some unfooted plains
 Where fed the herds of Pan : ay, great his gains
 Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,
 Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
 And ivy banks ; all leading pleasantly
 E

To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches : who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edged round with dark tree-tops ? through which a
 dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly ; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn : Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds ; rain-scented eglantine
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun ;
The lark was lost in him ; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass ;
Man's voice was on the mountains ; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders pulsed tenfold,
To feel the sunrise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
A troop of little children garlanded ;
Who, gathering round the altar, seemed to pry
Earnestly round, as wishing to espy

Some folk of holiday : nor had they waited
For many moments, ere their ears were sated
With a faint breath of music, which e'en then
Filled out its voice, and died away again.
Within a little space again it gave
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking
Through copse-clad valleys—ere their death, o'ertaking
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer showing, till at last
Into the widest alley they all passed,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly muse ! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee ;
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul ; that I may dare, in wayfaring
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd's song ;
Each having a white wicker over-brimmed
With April's tender younglings : next, well trimmed,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books ;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great Deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly :

Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tippèd flutes : close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,
Begirt with minist'ring looks : always his eye
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light ;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull :
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seemed like a poll of ivy in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appeared,
Up-followed by a multitude that reared
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown :
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown ;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's : beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nery knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance ; he seemed,
To common lookers on, like one who dreamed
Of idleness in groves Elysian :
But there were some who feelingly could scan

A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands : then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs piled solemnly. Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away !

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine : each look was changed
To sudden veneration : women meek
Beckoned their sons to silence ; while each cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan and pale, and with an awèd face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he—" Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands !
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks :
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains ; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb ;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibbled their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touched with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn :
Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air ;
And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup

Will put choice honey for a favoured youth :
 Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth
 Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
 Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
 Night-swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide plains
 Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not rains
 Greened over April's lap ? No howling sad
 Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had
 Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
 The earth is glad : the merry lark has poured
 His early song against you breezy sky,
 That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heaped a spire
 Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire ;
 Anon he stained the thick and spongy sod
 With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.
 Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
 Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
 And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
 'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
 Spread greily eastward, thus a chorus sang—

“ O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
 From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
 Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
 Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;
 Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
 Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken ;
 And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
 The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
 In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth ;
 Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth

Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow !
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan !

“ O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossèd realms : O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
Their fairest blossomed beans and popped corn ;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee ; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness ; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine !

“ Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies
For willing service ; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half-sleeping fit ;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again ;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their outpeeping ;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,

The while they pelt each other on the crown
 With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—
 By all the echoes that about thee ring,
 Hear us, O satyr king !

“ O Harkener to the loud-clapping shears,
 While ever and anon to his shorn peers
 A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,
 When snouted wild boars, routing tender corn,
 Anger our huntsman : Breather round our farms,
 To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :
 Strange ministrant of undescribèd sounds,
 That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
 And wither drearily on barren moors :
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors
 Leading to universal knowledge—see,
 Great son of Dryope,
 The many that are come to pay their vows
 With leaves about their brows !

“ Be still the unimaginable lodge
 For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
 Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven,
 That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
 Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :
 Be still a symbol of immensity ;
 A firmament reflected in a sea ;
 An element filling the space between ;
 An unknown—but no more : we humbly screen
 With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
 And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
 Conjure thee to receive our humble pœan,
 Upon thy Mount Lycean ! ”

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe and humming string.
Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten—out of memory :
Fair creatures ! whose young children's children bred
Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.
High genitors, unconscious did they cull
Time's sweet first-fruits—they danced to weariness,
And then in quiet circles did they press
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
Of some strange history, potent to send
A young mind from its bodily tenement.
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
On either side ; pitying the sad death
Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath
Of Zephyr slew him—Zephyr penitent,
Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament,
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
The archers, too, upon a wider plain,
Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,
And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft,
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
Called up a thousand thoughts to envelope
Those who would watch. Perhaps the trembling
knee
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
Poor, lonely Niobe ! when her lovely young

Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,
And very, very deadliness did nip
Her motherly cheeks. Aroused from this sad mood
By one, who at a distance loud halloed,
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
Many might after brighter visions stare :
After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,
Spangling those million poutings of the brine
With quivering ore ; 'twas even an awful shine
From the exaltation of Apollo's bow ;
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring
Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increased
The silvery setting of their mortal star.
There they discoursed upon the fragile bar
That keeps us from our homes ethereal ;
And what our duties there : to nightly call
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather ;
To summon all the downiest clouds together
For the sun's purple couch ; to emulate
In minst'ring the potent rule of fate
With speed of fire-tailed exhalations ;
To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons
Sweet poesy by moonlight : besides these,
A world of other unguessed offices.
Anon they wandered, by divine converse,
Into Elysium ; vying to rehearse
Each one his own anticipated bliss.

One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
His quick gone love, among fair blossomed boughs,
Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows
Her lips with music for that welcoming
Another wished, 'mid the eternal spring,
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales ;
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth
 wind,
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind ;
And ever after, through those regions be
His messenger, his little Mercury.
Some were athirst in soul to see again
Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign
In times long past ; to sit with them, and talk
Of all the chances in their earthly walk ;
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
Of happiness, to when upon the moors,
Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,
And shared their famished scrips. Thus all out-told
Their fond imaginations—saving him
Whose eyelids curtained up their jewels dim,
Endymion : yet hourly had he striven
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven
His fainting recollections. Now indeed
His senses had swooned off : he did not heed
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms :
But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
Like one who on the earth had never slept.
Ay, even as dead-still as a marble man,
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close ?
Peona, his sweet sister : of all those,
His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made,
And breathed a sister's sorrow to persuade
A yielding up, a cradling on her care.
Her eloquence did breathe away the curse :
She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse,
Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,
Along a path between two little streams—
Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,
From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow
From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small ;
Until they came to where these streamlets fall,
With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,
Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.
A little shallop, floating there hard by,
Pointed its beak over the fringed bank ;
And soon it lightly dipped, and rose, and sank,
And dipt again, with the young couple's weight—
Peona guiding, through the water straight,
Towards a bowery island opposite ;
Which gaining presently, she steerèd light
Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,
Where nested was an arbour, overwove
By many a summer's silent fingering ;
To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
Her playmates, with their needle broidery,
And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid
Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,
On her new couch, new made of flower leaves,
Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves

When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,
And the tanned harvesters rich armfuls took.
Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest :
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest
Peona's busy hand against his lips,
And still, a-sleeping, held her finger-tips
In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps
A patient watch over the stream that creeps
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
Held her in peace : so that a whispering blade
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling
Down in the bluebells, or a wren light rustling
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep ! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hushed and smooth ! O unconfined
Restraint ! imprisoned liberty ! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
Echoing grottoes, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight ; ay, to all the mazy world
Of silvery enchantment !—who, upfurled
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives ?—Thus, in the bower,
Endymion was calmed to life again.
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
He said : “ I feel this thine endearing love
All through my bosom : thou art as a dove
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
About me ; and the pearliest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May,
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes—the very home and haunt

Of sisterly affection. Can I want
 Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears ?
 Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears
 That, any longer, I will pass my days
 Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
 My voice upon the mountain-heights ; once more
 Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar :
 Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll
 Around the breathèd boar : again I'll poll
 The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow :
 And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
 Again I'll linger in a sloping mead
 To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed
 Our idle sheep. So be thou cheerèd sweet,
 And, if thy lute is here, softly entreat
 My soul to keep in its resolvèd course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
 Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,
 And took a lute, from which there pulsing came
 A lively prelude, fashioning the way
 In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
 More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
 Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child ;
 And nothing since has floated in the air
 So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare
 Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand ;
 For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spanned
 The quick invisible strings, even though she saw
 Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
 Before the deep intoxication.
 But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
 Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,
 And earnestly said—"Brother, 'tis vain to hide

That thou dost know of things mysterious,
 Immortal, starry ; such alone could thus
 Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinned in aught
 Offensive to the heavenly powers ? Caught
 A Paphian dove upon a message sent ?
 Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent,
 Sacred to Dian ? Haply, thou hast seen
 Her naked limbs among the alders green ;
 And that, alas ! is death. No, I can trace
 Something more high perplexing in thy face ! ”

Endymion looked at her, and pressed her hand,
 And said, “ Art thou so pale, who wast so bland
 And merry in our meadows ? How is this ?
 Tell me thine ailment : tell me all amiss !
 Ah ! thou hast been unhappy at the change
 Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange ?
 Or more complete to overwhelm surmise ?
 Ambition is no sluggard : ’tis no prize,
 That toiling years would put within my grasp,
 That I have sighed for : with so deadly gasp
 No man e’er panted for a mortal love.
 So all have set my heavier grief above
 These things which happen. Rightly have they done :
 I, who still saw the horizontal sun
 Heave his broad shoulder o’er the edge of the world,
 Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurled
 My spear aloft, as signal for the chase—
 I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
 With my own steed from Araby ; pluck down
 A vulture from his towery perching ; frown
 ▲ lion into growling, loth retire—
 To lose, at once, all my toil-breeding fire,

And sink thus low ! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

“ This river does not see the naked sky,
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon :
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eyes ;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kingly hour,
When he doth lighten up the golden reins,
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossomed suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred dittany, and poppies red :
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell ;
And, sitting down close by, began to muse
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook ;
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
Had dipt his rod in it : such garland wealth
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul ;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light ;

The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
And then were gulfed in a tumultuous swim :
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell
The enchantment that afterwards befell ?
Yet it was but a dream : yet such a dream
That never tongue, although it overteem
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
Could figure out and to conception bring
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours ;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appeared to open for my flight ;
I became loath and fearful to alight
From such high soaring by a downward glance :
So kept me steadfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view :
At which I sighed that I could not pursue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge ;
And lo ! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silvered o'er
A shell from Neptune's goblet : she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingleing with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent—
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyèd train
Of planets all were in the blue again.
To commune with those orbs, once more I raised
My sight right upward : but it was quite dazed
By a bright something, sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face :

Again I looked, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies !
Whence that completed form of all completeness ?
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness ?
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair ?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun ;
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister ! let me shun
Such follying before thee—yet she had,
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad ;
And they were simply gordianed up and braided,
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbèd brow ;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.
Unto what awful power shall I call ?
To what high fane ?—Ah ! see her hovering feet,
More bluely veined, more soft, more whitely sweet
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion ;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.”—“ Endymion, how strange !
Dream within dream ! ”—“ She took an airy range,
And then, towards me, like a very maid,
Came blushing, waning, willing, aud afraid,
And pressed me by the hand : Ah ! 'twas too much ;
Methought I fainted at the charmèd touch,

Yet held my recollection, even as one
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
Gurgling in beds of coral : for anon,
I felt upmounted in that region
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
That balances the heavy meteor-stone ;
Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,
But lapped and lulled along the dangerous sky.
Soon, as it seemed, we left our journeying high,
And straightway into frightful eddies swooped ;
Such as aye muster where grey time has scooped
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side :
There hollow sounds aroused me, and I sighed
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—
I was distracted ; madly did I kiss
The wooing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death : but 'twas to live,
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks ; to count, and count
The moments, by some greedy help that seemed
A second self, that each might be redeemed
And plundered of its load of blessedness.
Ah, desperate mortal ! I even dared to press
Her very cheek against my crownèd lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air : a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store
Of newest joys upon that Alp. Sometimes
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
Loitered around us ; then of honey cells,
Made delicate from all white-flower bells ;
And once, above the edges of our nest,
An arch face peeped—an Oread as I guessed.

“Why did I dream that sleep o’erpowered me
In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
And stare them from me? But, no, like a spark
That needs must die, although its little beam
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.
And so it was, until a gentle creep,
A careful moving caught my waking ears,
And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands—for lo! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ousel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,
With leaden looks: the solitary breeze
Blustered and slept, and its wild self did tease
With wayward melancholy; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
Faint fair-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus!
Away I wandered—all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
Seemed sooty, and o’erspread with upturned gills
Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns outgrown
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirred, and stirred
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguised demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice:
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,

Rocked me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven !
 These things, with all their comfortings, are given
 To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
 Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
 Of weary life."

Thus ended he, and both
 Sat silent : for the maid was very loth
 To answer ; feeling well that breathèd words
 Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords
 Against the encased crocodile, or leaps
 Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,
 And wonders ; struggles to devise some blame ;
 To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*
On this poor weakness ! but, for all her strife,
 She could as soon have crushed away the life
 From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,
 She said, with trembling chance—" Is this the cause ?
 This all ? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas !
 That one who through this middle earth should pass
 Most like a sojourning demigod, and leave
 His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
 No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
 Singing alone, and fearfully—how the blood
 Left his young cheek ; and how he used to stray
 He knew not where ; and how he would say, *nay*,
 If any said 'twas love : and yet 'twas love ;
 What could it be but love ? How a ringdove
 Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path ;
 And how he died : and then, that love doth scathe
 The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses ;
 And then the ballad of his sad life closes
 With sighs, and an alas !—Endymion !
 Be rather in the trumpet's mouth—anon

Among the winds at large—that all may hearken !
 Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
 I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
 Pictured in western cloudiness, that takes
 The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,
 Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands
 With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
 And towers of amethyst—would I so tease
 My pleasant days, because I could not mount
 Into those regions ? The Morphean fount
 Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
 And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams
 Into its airy channels with so subtle,
 So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
 Circled a million times within the space
 Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
 A tinting of its quality : how light [slight
 Must dreams themselves be ; seeing they're more
 Than the mere nothing that engenders them !
 Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
 Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick ?
 Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
 For nothing but a dream ?"—Hereat the youth
 Looked up : a conflicting of shame and ruth
 Was in his plaited brow : yet his eyelids
 Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
 A little breeze to creep between the fans
 Of careless butterflies : amid his pains
 He seemed to taste a drop of manna-dew,
 Full palatable : and a colour grew
 Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

"Peona ! ever have I longed to slake
 My thirst for the world's praises : nothing base,

No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepared—
Though now 'tis tattered ; leaving my bark bared
And sullenly drifting : yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
Wherein lies happiness ? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence ; till we shine,
Full alchemised, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven ! Fold
A rose-leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips : hist, when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Æolian magic from their lucid wombs :
Then old songs waken from unclouded tombs ;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;
Ghosts of melodious prophesyings rave
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot ;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was ;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
Feel we these things ?—that moment have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity : the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth

A steady splendour ; but at the tip-top,
 There hangs, by unseen film, an orbèd drop
 Of light, and that is love : its influence,
 Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
 At which we start and fret ; till in the end,
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,
 Mingle, and so become a part of it—
 Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
 So wiugèdly : when we combine therewith,
 Life's self is nourished by its proper pith,
 And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.
 Ay, so delicious is the unsating food,
 That men, who might have towered in the van
 Of all the congregated world, to fan
 And winnow from the coming step of time
 All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
 Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
 Have been content to let occasion die,
 Whilst they did sleep in love's Elysium.
 And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,
 Than speak against this ardent listlessness :
 For I have ever thought that it might bless
 The world with benefits unknowingly ;
 As does the nightingale, upperchèd high,
 And cloistered among cool and bunchèd leaves—
 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
 How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.
 Just so may love, although 'tis understood
 The mere commingling of passionate breath,
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth :
 What I know not : but who, of men, can tell [swell
 That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would
 To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
 The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,

The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet ?

“Now, if this earthly love has power to make
Men’s being mortal, immortal ; to shake
Ambition from their memories, and brim
Their measure of content ; what merest whim,
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
A love immortal, an immortal too.
Look not so wildered ; for these things are true,
And never can be born of atomies
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain flies,
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I’m sure
My restless spirit never could endure,
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
My sayings will the less obscurèd seem,
When I have told thee how my waking sight
Has made me scruple whether that same night
Was passed in dreaming. Hearken, sweet Peona !
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,
And meet so nearly, that with wings outraught,
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
Past them, but he must brush on every side.
Some mouldered steps lead into this cool cell
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,

Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet
Edges them round, and they have golden pits :
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.
And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,
I'd bubble up the water through a reed ;
So reaching back to boyhood : make me ships
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
With leaves stuck in them ; and the Neptune be
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through.
Upon a day, while thus I watched, by flew
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver ;
So plainly charactered, no breeze would shiver
The happy chance : so happy, I was fain
To follow it upon the open plain,
And, therefore, was just going ; when, behold !
A wonder, fair as any I have told—
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to flee—
I started up, when lo ! refreshfully,
There came upon my face, in plenteous showers,
Dewdrops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,
Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,
Bathing my spirit in a new delight.
Ay, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss
Alone preserved me from the drear abyss

Of death, for the fair form had gone again.
Pleasure is oft a visitant : but pain
Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth
On the deer's tender haunches : late, and loth,
'Tis scared away by slow returning pleasure.
How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure
Of weary days, made deeper exquisite
By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night !
Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still
Than when I wandered from the poppy hill :
And a whole age of lingering moments crept
Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept
Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.
Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen ;
Once more been tortured with renewèd life.
When last the wintry gusts gave over strife
With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies
Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes
In pity of the shattered infant buds—
That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,
My hunting cap, because I laughed and smiled,
Chatted with thee, and many days exiled
All torment from my breast—'twas even then,
Straying about, yet, cooped up in the den
Of helpless discontent—hurling my lance
From place to place, and following at chance,
At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck,
And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck
In the middle of a brook—whose silver ramble
Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble,
Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,
Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave
The nether sides of mossy stones and rock—
'Mong which it gurgled blithe adieus, to mock

Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead
Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and spread
Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home.
'Ah ! impious mortal, whither do I roam ?'
Said I, low voiced : ' Ah, whither ! 'Tis the grot
Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,
Doth her resign ; and where her tender hands
She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands :
Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
And babbles thorough silence, till her wits
Are gone in tender madness, and anon,
Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone
Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
And breathe them sighingly among the boughs
To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
And weave them dyingly—send honey-whispers
Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
May sigh my love unto her pitying !
O charitable Echo ! hear, and sing
This ditty to her !—tell her '———so I stayed
My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name
Most fondly lipped, and then these accents came :
' Endymion ! the cave is secreter
Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
Of thy coming hand, the while it travelling cloys
And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.'
At that oppressed I hurried in.—Ah ! where
Are those swift moments ? Whither are they fled ?
I'll smile no more, Peona ; nor will wed

Sorrow, the way to death ; but patiently
Bear up against it : so farewell, sad sigh ;
And come instead demurest meditation,
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.
No more will I count over, link by link,
My chain of grief : no longer strive to find
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
Blustering about my ears : ay, thou shalt see,
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be ;
What a calm round of hours shall make my days.
There is a paly flame of hope that plays
Where'er I look ; but yet, I'll say 'tis naught --
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,
Already, a more healthy countenance ?
By this the sun is setting ; we may chance
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car."

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand :
They stept into the boat, and launched from land.

BOOK II.

O SOVEREIGN power of love ! O grief ! O balm !
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,
And shadowy, through the mist of passèd years :
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent ; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.

The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks—all dimly fades
Into some backward corner of the brain ;
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
Hence, pageant history ! hence, gilded cheat !
Swart planet in the universe of deeds !
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
Along the pebbled shore of memory !
Many old rotten-timbered boats there be
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified
To goodly vessels ; many a sail of pride,
And golden-keeled, is left unlaunched and dry.
But wherefore this ? What care, though owl did fly
About the great Athenian admiral's mast ?
What care, though striding Alexander past
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers ?
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
The gluttoned Cyclops, what care ? Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers—sighing—weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
Doth more avail than these : the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully
Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
The path of love and poesy. But rest,
In chafing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crushed, in striving to uprear
Love's standard on the battlements of song.

So once more days and nights aid me along,
Like legioned soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd prince,
What promise hast thou faithful guarded since
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows
Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows?
Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;
Counting his woe-worn minutes by the strokes
Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still,
Hour after hour, to each lush-leaved rill.
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
And elbow-deep with feverish fingering
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree
Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight!
And, in the middle, there is softly pight
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
There must be surely charactered strange things,
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
Followed by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loosed, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seemed he flew, the way so easy was;
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,

O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams
The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him ; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-wingèd guide,
Until it reached a splashing fountain's side
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever poured
Unto the temperate air : then high it soared,
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip
The crystal spout-head : so it did, with touch
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
But, at that very touch, to disappear
So fairy-quick, was strange ! Bewildered,
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
Of covert flowers in vain ; and then he flung
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,
What whisperer disturbed his gloomy rest ?
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood
'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
And anxiously began to plait and twist
Her ringlets round her fingers, saying : " Youth !
Too long, alas, hast thou starved on the ruth,
The bitterness of love : too long indeed,

Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
To Amphitrite ; all my clear-eyed fish,
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
Vermilion-tailed, or finned with silvery gauze ;
Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
A virgin light to the deep ; my grotto-sands,
Tawny and gold, oozed slowly from far lands
By my diligent springs ; my level lilies, shells,
My charming rod, my potent river spells ;
Yes, everything, even to the pearly cup
Meander gave me—for I bubbled up
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
But woe is me, I am but as a child
To gladden thee ; and all I dare to say,
Is, that I pity thee ; that on this day
I've been thy guide ; that thou must wander far
In other regions, past the scanty bar
To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above :
But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell !
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze,
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze :
The dashing fount poured on, and where its pool
Lay half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,

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Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down ;
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
Thus breathed he to himself : " Whoso encamps
To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he ! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile :
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil ;
Another city doth he set about,
Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt
That he will seize on trickling honeycombs :
Alas, he finds them dry ; and then he foams,
And onward to another city speeds.
But this is human life ; the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human ; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to show
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,
Whether to weeds or flowers ; but for me,
There is no depth to strike in : I can see
Naught earthly worth my compassing ; so stand
Upon a misty jutting head of land—
Alone ? No, no ; and by the Orphean lute,
When mad Eurydice is listening to't ;
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove
Of heaven ! O Cynthia, ten times bright and fair !
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,

Glance but one little beam of tempered light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scared !
Yet do not so, sweet queen ; one torment spared,
Would give a pang to jealous misery,
Worse than the torment's self : but rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
Not to have dipped in love's most gentle stream.
O be propitious, nor severely deem
My madness impious ; for, by all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky !
How beautiful thou art ! The world, how deep !
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
Around their axle ! Then these gleaming reins,
How lithe ! When this thy chariot attains
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
Those twilight eyes ? Those eyes !—my spirit fails—
Dear goddess, help ! or the wide gaping air
Will gulf me—help ! ”—At this with maddened stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood ;
Like old Deucalion mountained o'er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone ;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passioned moan
Had more been heard. Thus swelled it forth :
“ Descend,
Young mountaineer ! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world !

Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurled
 As from thy threshold ; day by day hast been
 A little lower than the chilly sheen
 Of icy pinnacles, and dippedst thine arms
 Into the deadening ether that still charms
 Their marble being : now, as deep profound
 As those are high, descend ! He ne'er is crowned
 With immortality, who fears to follow
 Where airy voices lead : so through the hollow,
 The silent mysteries of earth, descend ! ”

He heard but the last words, nor could contend
 One moment in reflection : for he fled
 Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
 ‘From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

’Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness ;
 Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite
 To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
 The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
 But mingled up ; a gleaming melancholy ;
 A dusky empire and its diadems ;
 One faint eternal eventide of gems.
 Ay, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
 Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,
 With all its lines abrupt and angular :
 Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,
 Through a vast antre ; then the metal wof,
 Like Vulcan’s rainbow, with some monstrous roof
 Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,
 It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
 Fancy into belief : anon it leads
 Through winding passages, where sameness breeds

Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;
Whether to silver grotts, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
Towers like an ocean cliff, and whence he seeth
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and dumb
His bosom grew, when first he, far away,
Descried an orbèd diamond, set to fray
Old darkness from his throne : 'twas like the sun
Uprisen o'er chaos : and with such a stun
Came the amazement, that, absorbed in it,
He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,
Will be its high remembrancers : who they ?
The mighty ones who have made eternal day
For Greece and England. While astonishment
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
Into a marble gallery, passing through
A mimic temple, so complete and true
In sacred custom, that he well-nigh feared
To search it inwards ; whence far off appeared,
Through a long pillared vista, a fair shrine,
And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,
A quivered Dian. Stepping awfully,
The youth approached ; oft turning his veiled eye
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.
And when, more near against the marble cold
He had touched his forehead, he began to thread
All courts and passages, where silence dead
Roused by his whispering footsteps murmured faint :
And long he traversed to and fro, to acquaint

Himself with every mystery, and awe ;
 Till, weary, he sat down before the maw
 Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim,
 To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
 There, when new wonders ceased to float before,
 And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore
 The journey homeward to habitual self !
 A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
 Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
 Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
 Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing
 In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught
 The goal of consciousness ? Ah ! 'tis the thought
 The deadly feel of solitude : for lo !
 He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
 Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
 In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-piled,
 The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
 Like herded elephants ; nor felt, nor prest
 Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air ;
 But far from such companionship to wear
 An unknown time, surcharged with grief, away,
 Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
 Tracing fantastic figures with his spear ?
 " No ! " exclaimed he : " why should I tarry here ? "
 No ! loudly echoed times innumerable.
 At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell
 His paces back into the temple's chief ;
 Warming and glowing strong in the belief
 Of help from Dian : so that when again
 He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
 Moving more near the while. " O Haunter chaste

Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos?
Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
Of thy departed nymphs? Through what dark tree
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,
'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
An exiled mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—
O let me cool it zephyr-boughs among!
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—
O let me slake it at the running springs!
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—
O let me once more hear the linnet's note!
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float—
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light!
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice?
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap
His destiny, alert he stood; but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,

Feeling about for its old couch of space
 And airy cradle, lowly bowed his face,
 Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
 But 'twas not long ; for, sweeter than the rill
 To its old channel, or a swollen tide
 To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,
 And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns
 Up-heaping through the slab : refreshment drowus
 Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—
 Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride
 In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
 Before his footsteps ; as when heaved anew
 Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
 Down whose green back the short-lived foam, all hoar
 Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,
 Upon his fairy journey on he hastes ;
 So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes
 One moment with his hand among the sweets :
 Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats
 As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm
 Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,
 This sleepy music, forced him walk tiptoe !
 For it came more softly than the east could blow
 Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles ;
 Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
 Of throned Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
 To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
 Who loved—and music slew not ? 'Tis the pest
 Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest ;

That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallowed all, and made a searèd dearth,
By one consuming flame : it doth immerse
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear ;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,
Vanished in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head
Brushing, awakened : then the sounds again
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
Over a bower, where little space he stood ;
For as the sunset peeps into a wood
So saw he panting light, and towards it went
Through winding alleys ; and lo, wonderment !
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
Cupids a-slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle-walled, embowered high,
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside :
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty ; fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach :
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—

Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light ;
But rather, giving them to the fillèd sight
Officiously. Sideway his face reposed
On one white arm, and tenderly unclosed,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbery pout ; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipped rose. Above his head
Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal ; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwined and trammelled fresh :
The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,
Shading its Æthiop berries ; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
Convolvulus in streakèd vases flush ;
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;
And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
One, kneeling to a lyre, touched the strings,
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings ;
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber ; while another took
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair ; another flew
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
Rained violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
The breathless Latmian wondered o'er and o'er ;
Until, impatient in embarrassment,
He forthright passed, and lightly treading went,

To that same feathered lyrist, who straightway,
Smiling, thus whispered : " Though from upper day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer !
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense ;
As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence
Was I in nowise startled. So recline
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple : taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona : here is cream,
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam ;
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimmed
For the boy Jupiter : and here, undimmed
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums :
And here is manna picked from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
Of all these things around us." He did so,
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre ;
And thus : " I need not any hearing tire
By telling how the sea-born goddess pined
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind
Him all in all unto her doting self.
Who would not be so prisoned ? but, fond elf,
He was content to let her amorous plea
Faint through his careless arms ; content to see
An unseized heaven dying at his feet ;
Content, O fool ! to make a cold retreat,

When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,
Lay sorrowing ; when every tear was born
Of diverse passion ; when her lips and eyes
Were closed in sullen moisture, and quick sighs
Came vexed and pettish through her nostrils small.
Hush ! no exclaim—yet justly mightst thou call
Curses upon his head.—I was half-glad,
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
When the boar tusked him : so away she flew
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard ;
Whereon, it was decreed he should be reared
Each summer time to life. Lo ! this is he,
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy
Of this still region all his winter-sleep.
Ay, sleep ; for when our love-sick queen did weep
Over his wan'd corse, the tremulous shower
Healed up the wound, and, with a balmy power,
Medicin'd death to a lengthened drowsiness :
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
In all this quiet luxury ; and hath set
Us young immortals, without any let,
To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well-nigh passed,
Even to a moment's filling up, and fast
She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
Embowered sports in Cytherea's isle.
Look ! how those wing'd listeners all this while
Stand anxious : see ! behold !"—This clamant word
Broke through the careful silence ; for they heard
A rustling noise of leaves, and out there fluttered
Pigeons and doves : Adonis something muttered,
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
Lay dormant, moved convulsed and gradually

Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come! come!
Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walked
Unto the clover-sward, and she has talked
Full soothingly to every nested finch:
Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the bluebell pinch
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!"
At this, from every side they hurried in,
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
And doubling over head their little fists
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive
In nectared clouds and curls through water fair,
So from the arbour roof down swelled an air
Odorous and enlivening; making all
To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreath'd green
Disparted, and far upward could be seen
Blue heaven, and silver car, air-borne,
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,
Spun off a drizzling dew—which falling chill
On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still
Nestle and turn uneasily about. [out,
Soon were the white doves plain, with necks stretched
And silken traces lightened in descent;
And soon returning from love's banishment,
Queen Venus leaning downward, open-armed:
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charmed
A tumult to his heart, and a new life
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,
But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write
Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse
To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
Saving Love's self, who stands superb to share
The general gladness : awfully he stands ;
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands ;
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow ;
His quiver is mysterious, none can know
What themselves think of it ; from forth his eyes
There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes :
A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
Look full upon it feel anon the blue
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
Endymion feels it, and no more controls
The burning prayer within him ; so, bent low,
He had begun a plaining of his woe.
But Venus, bending forward, said : " My child,
Favour this gentle youth ; his days are wild
With love—he—but, alas ! too well I see
Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.
Ah, smile not so, my son : I tell thee true,
That when through heavy hours I used to rue
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',
This stranger aye I pitied. For upon
A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love : for vexing Mars had teased
Me even to tears : thence, when a little eased,
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
I saw this youth as he despairing stood :
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind ;
Those same full fringèd lids a constant blind
Over his sullen eyes : I saw him throw
Himself on withered leaves, even as though
Death had come sudden ; for no jot he moved,
Yet muttered wildly. I could hear he loved

Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace
Of this in heaven : I have marked each cheek,
And find it is the vainest thing to seek ;
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.
Endymion ! one day thou wilt be blest :
So still obey the guiding hand that fends
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme ;
And if I guessed not so, the sunny beam
Thou should'st mount up to with me. Now adieu !
Here must we leave thee."—At these words up flew
The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,
Up went the hum celestial. High afar
The Latmian saw them minish into naught ;
And, when all were clear vanished, still he caught
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.
When all was darkened, with Ætnean throe
The earth closed—gave a solitary moan—
And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,
And he in loneliness : he felt assured
Of happy times, when all he had endured
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves and palaces of mottled ore,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,
Black polished porticoes of awful shade,
And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
Leading afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence

Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds ;
Then heightened just above the silvery heads
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
The waters with his spear ; but at the splash,
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round
Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells
On this delight ; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changèd magic interlace :
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Covered with crystal vines ; then weeping trees,
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refined,
Poured into shapes of curtained canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare ;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimicked the wrought oaken beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dusk places in times far aloof
Cathedrals called. He bade a loth farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulf, and dell,
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,
Half seen through deepest gloom, and grisly gapes,
Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
With starlight gems : ay, all so huge and strange,
The solitary felt a hurried change

Working within him into something dreary—
 Vexed like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,
 And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds.
 But he revives at once: for who beholds
 New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough?
 Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
 Came mother Cybele! alone—alone—
 In sombre chariot: dark foldings thrown
 About her majesty, and front death-pale,
 With turrets crowned. Four manèd lions hale
 The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothèd maws,
 Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
 Uplifted drowsily, and nery tails
 Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
 This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
 In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,
 Young traveller, in such a mournful place?
 Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
 The diamond path? And does it indeed end
 Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend
 Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
 Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;
 Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;
 To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
 Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,
 Without one impious word, himself he flings,
 Committed to the darkness and the gloom:
 Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
 Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
 Through unknown things; till exhaled asphodel,
 And rose, with spicy fannings interbreathed,
 Came swelling forth where little caves were wreathed

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So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seemed
 Like honeycombs of green, and freshly teemed
 With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
 The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
 With golden moss. His every sense had grown
 Ethereal for pleasure ; 'bove his head
 Flew a delight, half graspable ; his tread
 Was Hesperian ; to his capable ears
 Silence was music from the holy spheres ;
 A dewy luxury was in his eyes ;
 The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
 And stirred them faintly. Verdant cave and cell
 He wandered through, oft wondering at such swell
 Of sudden exaltation : but, "Alas !"
 Said he, " will all this gush of feeling pass
 Away in solitude ? And must they wane,
 Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
 Without an echo ? Then shall I be left
 So sad, so melancholy, so bereft !
 Yet still I feel immortal ! O my love,
 My breath of life, where art thou ? High above,
 Dancing before the morning gates of heaven ?
 Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
 Old Atlas' children ? Art a maid of the waters,
 One of shell-winding Triton's bright-haired daughters ?
 Or art, impossible ! a nymph of Dian's,
 Weaving a coronal of tender scions
 For very idleness ? Where'er thou art,
 Methinks it now is at my will to start
 Into thine arms ; to scare Aurora's train,
 And snatch thee from the morning ; o'er the main

To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle ; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee 'mid fresh leaves.
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self : I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee
To her entrancements : hither sleep awhile !
Hither, most gentle sleep ! and soothing foil
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued
With power to dream deliciously ; so wound
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss !
A naked waist : " Fair Cupid, whence is this ?"
A well-known voice sighed, " Sweetest, here am I !"
At which soft ravishment, with doating cry
They trembled to each other.—Helicon !
O fountained hill ! Old Homer's Helicon !
That thou would'st spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages ; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
Over his nested young : but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Ay, the count
Of mighty Poets is made up ; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses ; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand : our dazed eyes
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies :
The world has done its dnty. Yet, oh yet,
Although the sun of poesy is set,

These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time in silence did their anxious fears
Question that thus it was ; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away ;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.
“ O known Unknown ! from whom my being sips
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms ? in this sweet spot
Pillow my chin for ever ? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess ?
Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes ? Ah, thou wilt steal
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair !
Is—is it to be so ? No ! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me ? And, of thine own will,
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now
How can we part ? Elysium ! who art thou ?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere ?
Enchantress ! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft completion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,
The passion”——“ O loved Ida the divine !
Endymion ! dearest ! Ah, unhappy me !
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity !

How he does love me ! His poor temples beat
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet, sweet.
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die ;
Revive, or these short hours will hurry by
In trancèd dulness ; speak, and let that spell
Affright this lethargy ! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
What ! dost thou move ? dost kiss ? O bliss ! O pain !
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest : yet must I hence ;
Yet, can I not to starry eminence
Uplift thee ; nor for very shame can own
Myself to thee. Ah, dearest, do not groan,
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done it already ; that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassioned wiles,
Had wanèd from Olympus' solemn height,
And from all serious gods ; that our delight
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone !
And wherefore so ashamed ? 'Tis but to atone
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes :
Yet must I be a coward !—Horror rushes
Too palpable before me—the sad look
Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
In reverence veiled—my crystalline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity !
But what is this to love ? O I could fly
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,

Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once
 That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
 Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
 O I do think that I have been alone
 In chastity : yes, Pallas has been sighing,
 While every eve saw me my hair uptying
 With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,
 I was as vague as solitary dove,
 Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—
 Ay, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
 An immortality of passion's thine :
 Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
 Of heaven ambrosial ; and we will shade
 Ourselves whole summers by a river glade :
 And I will tell thee stories of the sky,
 And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
 My happy love will overwing all bounds !
 O let me melt into thee ; let the sounds
 Of our close voices marry at their birth ;
 Let us entwine hoveringly—O dearth
 Of human words ! roughness of mortal speech !
 Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach
 Thine honeyed tongue—lute-breathings, which I gasp
 To have thee understand, now while I clasp
 Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pained,
 Endymion : woe ! woe ! is grief contained
 In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life ?"—
 Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
 Melted into a languor. He returned
 Entrancèd vows and tears.

Ye who have yearned
 With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
 For the mere sake of truth ; as 'tis a ditty

Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old :
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phœbus' shrine ; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspirèd place
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers
Yon sentinel stars ; and he who listens to it
Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it :
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart
Made fiercer by the fear lest any part
Should be engulfèd in the eddying wind.
As much as here is penned doth always find
A resting-place, thus much comes clear and plain ;
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—
And 'tis but echoed from departing sound,
That the fair visitant at last unwound
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
Sweet paining on his ear : he sickly guessed
How lone he was once more, and sadly pressed
His empty arms together, hung his head,
And most forlorn upon that widowed bed
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known :
Often with more than tortured lion's groan

Moanings had burst from him ; but now that rage
Had passed away : no longer did he wage
A rough-voiced war against the dooming stars.
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars :
The lyre of his soul Æolian tuned
Forgot all violence, and but communed
With melaucholy thought : O he had swooned
Drunken from pleasure's nipple ; and his love
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
In muffling hands. So tempered, out he strayed,
Half seeing visions that might have dismayed
Alecto's servants ; ravishments more keen
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
Over eclipsing eyes : and at the last
It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
O'er-studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,
And crimson-mouthèd shells with stubborn curls,
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
In which whales harbour close, to brood and sulk
Against an endless storm. Moreover, too,
Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,
Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
On all his life : his youth, up to the day
When, 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,
He stept upon his shepherd throne : the look
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
And all the revels he had lorded there :
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,
With every friend and fellow-woodlander—
Passed like a dream before him. Then the spur
Of the old bards to mighty deeds : his plans

To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans :
That wondrous night : the great Pan-festival :
His sister's sorrow ; and his wanderings all,
Until into the earth's deep maw he rushed :
Then all its buried magic, till it flushed
High with excessive love. " And now," thought he,
" How long must I remain in jeopardy
Of blank amazements that amaze no more ?
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core,
All other depths are shallow : essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
And make my branches lift a golden fruit
Into the bloom of heaven : other light,
Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark !
My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells,
Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
Of noises far away ?—list !" Hereupon
He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
Came louder, and behold, there, as he lay,
On either side outgushed, with misty spray,
A copious spring ; and both together dashed
Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lashed
Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,
Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise
As of some breathless racers whose hopes poise
Upon the last few steps, and with spent force
Along the ground they took a winding course.
Endymion followed—for it seemed that one
Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—
Followed their languid mazes, till well-nigh

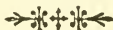
He had left thinking of the mystery—
 And was now rapt in tender hoverings
 Over the vanished bliss. Ah ! what is it sings
 His dream away ? What melodies are these ?
 They sound as through the whispering of trees,
 Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear !

“ O Arethusa, peerless nymph ! why fear
 Such tenderness as mine ? Great Dian, why—
 Why didst thou hear her prayer ? O that I
 Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
 Circling about her waist, and striving how
 To entice her to a dive ! then stealing in
 Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
 O that her shining hair was in the sun,
 And I distilling from it, thence to run
 In amorous rillets down her shrinking form !
 To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
 Between her kissing breasts, and every charm
 Touch raptur'd !—See how painfully I flow :
 Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.
 Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,
 A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
 Where all that beauty snared me.”—“ Cruel god,
 Desist ! or my offended mistress' nod
 Will stagnate all thy fountains : tease me not
 With siren words—Ah, have I really got
 Such power to madden thee ? And is it true—
 Away, away, or I shall dearly rue
 My very thoughts ; in mercy, then, away,
 Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
 My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.”—
 “ O, Oread-Queen ! would that thou hadst a pain
 Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn

And be a criminal."—"Alas, I burn,
I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence.
Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense
Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.
Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods,
Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave;
But ever since I heedlessly did lave
In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow
Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so,
And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty.
Not once more did I close my happy eyes
Amid the thrush's song. Away! Avaunt!
O 'twas a cruel thing."—"Now thou dost taunt
So softly, Arethusa, that I think
If thou wast playing on my shady brink,
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid!
Stifle thine heart no more; nor be afraid
Of angry powers: there are deities
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
A dewy balm upon them!—fear no more,
Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel
Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly
These dreary caverns for the open sky.
I will delight thee all my winding course,
From the green sea up to my hidden source
About Arcadian forests; and will show
The channels where my coolest waters flow
Through mossy rocks; where, 'mid exuberant green,
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen
Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim
Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim
Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees

Buzz from their honeyed wings : and thou shouldst
 please
 Thyself to choose the richest, where we might
 Be incense-pillowed overy summer night.
 Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,
 And let us be thus comforted ; unless
 Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream
 Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,
 And pour to death along some hungry sands."
 "What can I do, Alpheus ? Dian stands
 Severe before me : persecuting fate !
 Unhappy Arethusa ! thou wast late
 A huntress free in "—At this, sudden fell
 Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.
 The Latnian listened, but he heard no more,
 Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er
 The name of Arethusa. On the verge
 Of that dark gulf he wept, and said—"I urge
 Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
 By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
 If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains ;
 And make them happy in some happy plains."

He turned—there was a whelming sound—he stept.
 There was a cooler light ; and so he kept
 Towards it by a sandy path, and lo !
 More suddenly than doth a moment go,
 The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
 He saw the giant sea above his head.



BOOK III.

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
With most prevailing tinsel : who unpen
Their baaing vanities, to browse away
The comfortable green and juicy hay
From human pastures ; or, O torturing fact !
Who, though an idiot blink, will see unpacked
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
Our gold and ripe-eared hopes. With not one tinge
Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
Their tip-top nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belaboured drums,
And sudden cannon. Ah ! how all this hums,
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—
Like thunder-clouds that spake to Babylon,
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.
Are then regalities all gilded masks ?
No, there are thronèd seats unscalable
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
Or by ethereal things that, unconfined,
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents
To watch the abysm-birth of elements.
Ay, 'bove the withering of old-lipped Fate
A thousand Powers keep religious state,
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne ;
And, silent as a consecrated urn,

Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few !
Have bared their operations to this globe—
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence
Shakes hand with our own Ceres ; every sense
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud
'Twi't Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair
Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
She unobservèd steals unto her throne,
And there she sits most meek and most alone ;
As if she had not pomp subservient ;
As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart ;
As if the minist'ring stars kept not apart,
Waiting for silver-footed messages.
O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in :
O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless everywhere, with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine :
Innumerable mountains rise and rise,
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ;
And yet thy benediction passeth not
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief

To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea !
Oh Moon, far-spooming Ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels her forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia ! where art thou now ? what far abode
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
Such utmost beauty ? Alas, thou dost pine
For one as sorrowful : thy cheek is pale
For one whose cheek is pale : thou dost bewail
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh ?
Ah ! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
Or, what a thing is love ! 'Tis She, but lo !
How changed, how full of ache, how gone in woe !
She dies at the thinnest cloud ; her loveliness
Is wan on Neptune's blue : yet there's a stress
Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
The curly foam with amorous influence.
O, not so idle ! for down-glancing thence
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
O'erwhelming watercourses ; scaring out
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and frightening
Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning.
Where will the splendour be content to reach ?
O love ! how potent hast thou been to teach
Strange journeyings ! Wherever beauty dwells,
In gulf or eyrie, mountains or deep dells,
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
Amid his toil thou gavest Leander breath ;
Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death ;

Thou madest Pluto bear thin element ;
 And now, O wingèd Chieftain ! thou hast sent
 A moonbeam to the deep, deep water-world,
 To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearled
 With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
 Poor Cynthia greeted him, and soothed her light
 Against his pallid face : he felt the charm
 To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm
 Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stayed
 His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid
 His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,
 To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,
 Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.
 And so he kept, until the rosy veils
 Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand
 Were lifted from the water's breast, and fanned
 Into sweet air ; and sobered morning came
 Meekly through billows : when, like taper-flame
 Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,
 He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
 Along his fated way.

Far had he roamed,
 With nothing save the hollow vast, that foamed
 Above, around, and at his feet ; save things
 More dead than Morpheus' imaginings :
 Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large
 Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe ;
 Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
 The sway of human hand ; gold vase embossed
 With long-forgotten story, and wherein
 No reveller had ever dipped a chin

But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,
 Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
 Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude
 In ponderous stone, developing the mood
 Of ancient Nox ; then skeletons of man,
 Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
 And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
 Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe
 These secrets struck into him ; and unless
 Dian had chased away that heaviness,
 He might have died : but now, with cheer'd feel,
 He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to steal
 About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

“ What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou shouldst
 move

My heart so potently ? When yet a child
 I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smiled.
 Thou seemedest my sister : hand in hand we went
 From eve to morn across the firmament.
 No apples would I gather from the tree,
 Till thou hadst cooled their cheeks deliciously :
 No tumbling water ever spake romance,
 But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance :
 No woods were green enough, no bower divine,
 Until thou liftedest up thine eyelids fine :
 In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,
 Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ;
 And, in the summer time of blossoming,
 No one but thee hath heard me blithely sing
 And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.
 No melody was like a passing sprite
 If it went not to solemnise thy reign.
 Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain

By thee were fashioned to the self-same end ;
And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ;
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage’s pen—
The poet’s harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;
Thou wast my clarion’s blast—thou wast my steed—
My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !
O what a wild and harmonisèd tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful !
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
Myself to immortality : I prest
Nature’s soft pillow in a wakeful rest.
But, gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—
My strange love came—Felicity’s abyss !
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—
Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway
Has been an under-passion to this hour.
Now I begin to feel thine orby power
Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind,
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind
My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive
That I can think away from thee and live !
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries !
How far beyond !” At this a surprised start
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ;
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear
How his own goddess was past all things fair,
He saw far in the concave green of the sea
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
Upon a wedded rock this old man sat,
And his white hair was awful, and a mat

Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet ;
And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,
A cloak of blue wrapped up his aged bones,
O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans
Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form
Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm,
And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar
Were embled in the woof ; with every shape
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.
The gulping whale was like a dot in the spell,
Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell
To its huge self ; and the minutest fish
Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,
And show his little eye's anatomy.
Then there was pictured the regality
Of Neptune ; and the sea-nymphs round his state,
In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.
Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,
And in his lap a book, the which he conned
So steadfastly, that the new denizen
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man raised his hoary head and saw
The wildered stranger—seeming not to see,
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly
He woke as from a trance ; his snow-white brows
Went arching up, and like to magic ploughs
Furrowed deep wrinkles in his forehead large,
Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,
Till round his withered lips had gone a smile.
Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil
Had watched for years in forlorn hermitage,
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age

Eased in one accent his o'er-burdened soul,
 Even to the trees. He rose : he grasped his stole,
 With convulsed clenches waving it abroad,
 And in a voice of solemn joy, that awed
 Echo into oblivion, he said :—

“Thou art the man ! Now shall I lay my head
 In peace upon my watery pillow : now
 Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.
 O Jove ! I shall be young again, be young !
 O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierced and stung
 With new-born life ! What shall I do ? Where go,
 When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe ?
 I'll swim to the sirens, and one moment listen
 Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten ;
 Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,
 That writhes about the roots of Sicily :
 To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,
 And mount upon the snortings of a whale
 To some black cloud ; thence down I'll madly sweep
 On forkèd lightning, to the deepest deep,
 Where through some sucking pool I will be hurled
 With rapture to the other side of the world !
 O, I am full of gladness ! Sisters three,
 I bow full-hearted to your old decree !
 Yes, every god be thanked, and power benign,
 For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.
 Thou art the man !” Endymion started back
 Dismayed ; and, like a wretch from whom the rack
 Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,
 Muttered : “What lonely death am I to die
 In this cold region ? Will he let me freeze,
 And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas ?
 Or will he touch me with his searing hand,

And leave a black memorial on the sand ?
Or tear me piecemeal with a bony saw,
And keep me as a chosen food to draw
His magian fish through hated fire and flame ?
O misery of hell ! resistless, tame,
Am I to be burnt up ? No, I will shout,
Until the gods through heaven's blue look out !
O Tartarus ! but some few days ago
Her soft arms were entwining me, and on
Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves :
Her lips were all my own, and—ah, ripe sheaves
Of happiness ! ye on the stubble droop,
But never may be garnered. I must stoop
My head, and kiss death's foot. Love ! love, farewell !
Is there no hope from thee ? This horrid spell
Would melt at thy sweet breath. By Dian's hind
Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind
I see thy streaming hair ! and now, by Pan,
I care not for this old mysterious man !”

He spake, and walking to that aged form,
Looked high defiance. Lo ! his heart 'gan warm
With pity, for the grey-haired creature wept.
Had he then wronged a heart where sorrow kept ?
Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought
Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought,
Convulsion to a mouth of many years ?
He had in truth ; and he was ripe for tears.
The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt
Before that careworn sage, who trembling felt
About his large dark locks, and faltering spake

“ Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus' sake
I know thy inmost bosom, and I feel

A very brother's yearning for thee steal
 Into mine own : for why ? thou openest
 The prison gates that have so long oppress
 My weary watching. Though thou knowest it not,
 Thou art commissioned to this fated spot
 For great enfranchisement. O weep no more ;
 I am a friend to love, to loves of yore :
 Ay, hadst thou never loved an unknown power,
 I had been grieving at this joyous hour.
 But even now most miserable old,
 I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold
 Gave mighty pulses : in this tottering case
 Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays
 As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,
 For thou shalt hear this secret all displayed,
 Now as we speed towards our joyous task."

So saying, this young soul in age's mask
 Went forward with the Carian side by side :
 Resuming quickly thus ; while ocean's tide
 Hung swollen at their backs, and jewelled sands
 Took silently their footprints :

" My soul stands

Now past the midway from mortality,
 And so I can prepare without a sigh
 To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.
 I was a fisher once, upon this main,
 And my boat danced in every creek and bay ;
 Rough billows were my home by night and day—
 The seagulis not more constant ; for I had
 No housing from the storm and tempests mad,
 But hollow rocks—and they were palaces
 Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease :

Long years of misery have told me so.
Ay, thus it was one thousand years ago.
One thousand years !—Is it then possible
To look so plainly through them ? to dispel
A thousand years with backward glance sublime ?
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peep ?
Yes : now I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading seum,
Tho' which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

“ I touched no lute, I sang not, trod no measures :
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.
Dolphins were still my playmates ; shapes unseen
Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,
Nor be my desolation ; and, full oft,
When a dread waterspout had reared aloft
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,
Has dived to its foundations, gulfed it down,
And left me tossing safely. But the crown
Of all my life was utmost quietude :
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,
And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice !

There blushed no summer eve but I would steer
 My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear
 The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,
 Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep :
 And never was a day of summer shine,
 But I beheld its birth upon the brine :
 For I would watch all night to see unfold
 Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold
 Wide o'er the swelling streams : and constantly
 At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
 My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
 The poor folk of the sea-country I blest
 With daily boon of fish most delicate :
 They knew not whence this bounty, and elate
 Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

“ Why was I not contented ? Wherefore reach
 At things which, but for thee, O Latmian !
 Had been my dreary death ? Fool ! I began
 To feel distempered longings : to desire
 The utmost privilege that Ocean's sire
 Could grant in benediction : to be free
 Of all his kingdom. Long in misery
 I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
 I plunged for life or death. To interknit
 One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
 Might seem a work of pain ; so not enough
 Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
 And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
 Whole days and days in sheer astonishment ;
 Forgetful utterly of self-intent ;
 Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
 Then, like a new-fledged bird that first doth show
 His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,

I tried in fear the pinions of my will.
'Twas freedom ! and at once I visited
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.
No need to tell thee of them, for I see
That thou hast been a witness—it must be
For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,
By the melancholy corners of that mouth.
So I will in my story straightway pass
To more immediate matter. Woe, alas !
That love should be my bane ! Ah, Scylla fair !
Why did poor Glaucus ever—ever dare
To sue thee to his heart ? Kind stranger-youth !
I loved her to the very white of truth,
And she would not conceive it. Timid thing !
She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,
Round every isle, and point, and promontory,
From where large Hercules wound up his story
Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue
Gleam delicately through the azure clear,
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear ;
And in that agony, across my grief
It flashed, that Circe might find some relief—
Cruel enchantress ! So above the water
I reared my head, and looked for Phœbus' daughter.
Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon ;
It seemed to whirl around me, and a swoon
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

“ When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower ;
Just when the light of moon, with hum of bees,
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.
How sweet, and sweeter ! for I heard a lyre,
And over it a sighing voice expire.

It ceased—I caught light footsteps ; and anon
 The fairest face that morn e'er looked upon
 Pushed through a screen of roses. Starry Jove !
 With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove
 A net whose thralldom was more bliss than all
 The range of flowered Elysium. Thus did fall
 The dew of her rich speech—' Ah ! art awake ?
 O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake !
 I am so oppressed with joy ! Why, I have shed
 An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead ;
 And now I find thee living, I will pour
 From these devoted eyes their silver store,
 Until exhausted of the latest drop,
 So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop
 Here, that I, too, may live ; but if beyond
 Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond
 Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme ;
 If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream ;
 If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,
 Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,
 O let me pluck it for thee.' Thus she linked
 Her charming syllables, till indistinct
 Their music came to my o'er-sweetened soul ;
 And then she hovered over me and stole
 So near, that if no nearer it had been
 This furrowed visage thou hadst never seen.

“ Young man of Latmos ! thus particular
 Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far
 This fierce temptation went ; and thou may'st not
 Exclaim, How, then, was Scylla quite forgot ?

“ Who could resist ? Who in this universe ?
 She did so breathe ambrosia ; so immerse

My fine existence in a golden clime.
She took me like a child of suckling time,
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemned,
The current of my former life was stemmed,
And to this arbitrary queen of sense
I bowed a tranced vassal : nor would thence
Have moved, even though Amphion's harp had wooed
Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.
For as Apollo each eve doth devise
A new apparelling for western skies ;
So every eve, nay, every spendthrift hour,
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.
And I was free of haunts umbrageous ;
Could wander in the mazy forest-house
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antlered deer,
And birds from coverts innermost and drear,
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—
To me new-born delights !

“ Now let me borrow,
For moments few, a temperament as stern
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn
These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell
How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

“ One morn she left me sleeping : half awake
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts ;
But she was gone. Whereat the barbèd shafts
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,
That out I ran and searched the forest o'er.
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom
Damp awe assailed me ; for there 'gan to boom

A sound of moan, an agony of sound,
Sepulchral from the distance all around.
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled
That fierce complain to silence : while I stumbled
Down a precipitous path, as if impelled.
I came to a dark valley.—Groanings swelled
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,
The nearer I approached a flame's gaunt blue,
That glared before me through a thorny brake.
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,
Bewitched me towards ; and I soon was near
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear :
In thicket hid I cursed the haggard scene—
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,
Seated upon an uptorn forest root ;
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,
Laughing, and wailing, grovelling, serpentine,
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting !
O such deformities ! Old Charon's self,
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,
And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian,
It could not be so fantasied. Fierce, wan,
And tyrannising was the lady's look,
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.
Ofttimes upon the sudden she laughed out,
And from a basket emptied to the rout
Clusters of grapes, the which they ravened quick
And roared for more ; with many a hungry lick
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,
And emptied ou't a black dull-gurgling phial :
Groaned one and all, as if some piercing trial
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.
She lifted up the charm : appealing groans

From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear
In vain ; remorseless as an infant's bier
She whisked against their eyes the sooty oil.
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage ;
Until their grievèd bodies 'gan to bloat
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat :
Then was appalling silence : then a sight
More wildering than all that hoarse affright ;
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writthen,
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python
Antagonising Boreas—and so vanished.
Yet there was not a breath of wind : she banished
These phantoms with a nod. Lo ! from the dark
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark,
With dancing and loud revelry—and went
Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.
Sighing, an elephant appeared and bowed
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud
In human accent : ' Potent Goddess ! chief
Of pains resistless ! make my being brief,
Or let me from this heavy prison fly :
Or give me to the air, or let me die !
I sue not for my happy crown again ;
I sue not for my phalanx on the plain ;
I sue not for my lone, my widowed wife ;
I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,
My children fair, my lovely girls and boys !
I will forget them ; I will pass these joys ;
Ask naught so heavenward, so too—too high :
Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,
Or be delivered from this cumbrous flesh,
From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,

And merely given to the cold, bleak air.
Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer !'

“ That curst magician's name fell icy numb
Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come
Naked and sabre-like against my heart.
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart ;
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.
Think, my deliverer, how desolate
My waking must have been ! disgust, and hate,
And terrors manifold divided me
A spoil amongst them. I prepared to flee
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood :
I fled three days—when lo ! before me stood,
Glaring, the angry witch. O Dis, even now,
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,
At mere remembering her pale laugh and curse.
' Ha ! ha ! Sir Dainty ! there must be a nurse
Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,
To cradle thee, my sweet, and lull thee : yes,
I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch :
My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.
So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
Unheard of yet ; and it shall still its cries
Upon some breast more lily-feminine.
Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine
More than one pretty, trifling thousand years ;
And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears
Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt !
Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt
One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh,
That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.
And must we part ? Ah, yes, it must be so.

Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,
Let me sob over thee my last adieus,
And speak a blessing : Mark me ! Thou hast thews
Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race :
But such a love is mine, that here I chase
Eternally away from thee all bloom
Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.
Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast ;
And there, ere many days be overpast,
Disabled age shall seize thee ! and even then
Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ;
But live and wither, cripple and still breathe,
Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath
Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.
Adieu, sweet love, adieu ! '—As shot stars fall,
She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung
And poisoned was my spirit : despair sung
A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.
A hand was at my shoulder to compel
My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes
Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise
Enforcèd, at the last by ocean's foam
I found me ; by my fresh, my native home.
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,
Came salutary as I waded in ;
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave
Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave
Large froth before me, while there yet remained
Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drained.

“ Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite
With dry cheek who can tell ? While thus my might
Proving upon this element, dismayed,
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid ;

I looked—'twas Seylla ! Cursed, cursed Circe !
 O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy ?
 Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,
 But thou must nip this tender innocent
 Because I loved her ?—Cold, O cold indeed
 Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed
 'The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was
 I clung about her waist, nor ceased to pass
 Fleet as an arrow through unfathomed brine,
 Until there shone a fabric crystalline,
 Ribbed and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
 Headlong I darted ; at one eager swirl
 Gained its bright portal, entered, and behold !
 'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold ;
 And all around—But wherefore this to thee
 Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see ?
 I left poor Seylla in a niche and fled.
 My fevered parchings up, my scathing dread
 Met palsy half way : soon these limbs became
 Gaunt, withered, sapless, feeble, cramped, and lame.

“ Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,
 Without one hope, without one faintest trace
 Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble
 Of coloured fantasy ; for I fear 'twould trouble
 Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell
 How a restoring chance came down to quell
 One half of the witch in me.

“ On a day,
 Sitting upon a rock above the spray,
 I saw grow up from the horizon's brink
 A gallant vessel : soon she seemed to sink
 Away from me again, as though her course

Had been resumed in spite of hindering force—
So vanished : and not long before arose
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.
Old Æolus would stifle his mad spleen,
But could not : therefore all the billows green
Tossed up the silver spume against the clouds.
The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds
In perilous bustle : while upon the deck
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ;
The final gulping ; the poor struggling souls :
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.
O they had all been saved but crazèd eld
Annulled my vigorous cravings : and thus quelled
And curbed, think on't, O Latmian ! did I sit
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,
By one and one, to pale oblivion ;
And I was gazing on the surges prone,
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,
When at my feet emerged an old man's hand,
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.
I knelt with pain—reached out my hand—had grasped
These treasures—touched the knuckles—they un-
clasped—

I caught a finger : but the downward weight
O'erpowered me—it sank. Then 'gan abate
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst
The comfortable sun. I was athirst
To search the book, and in the warming air
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on
My soul page after page, till well-nigh wou
Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied,
I read these words, and read again, and tried

My eyes against the heavens, and read again.
 O what a load of misery and pain
 Each Atlas-line bore off!—a shine of hope
 Came gold around me, cheering me to cope
 Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend!
 For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

“ ‘ *In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,
 Doomed with enfeebled carcass to outstretch
 His loathed existence through ten centuries,
 And then to die alone. Who can devise
 A total opposition? No one. So
 One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
 And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,
 These things accomplished:—If he utterly
 Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds
 The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds:
 If he explores all forms and substances
 Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;
 He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
 He must pursue this task of joy and grief
 Most piously; all lovers tempest-tost,
 And in the savage overwhelming lost,
 He shall deposit side by side, until
 Time’s creeping shall the dreary space fulfil.
 Which done, and all these labours ripened,
 A youth, by heavenly power loved and led,
 Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct
 How to consummate all. The youth elect
 Must do the thing, or both will be destroyed.* ’ ”

“ Then,” cried the young Endymion, overjoyed,
 “ We are twin brothers in this destiny !

Say, I entreat thee, what achievement high
Is, in this restless world, for me reserved.
What ! if from thee my wandering feet had swerved,
Had we both perished ?"—"Look !" the sage replied,
"Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,
Of divers brilliances ? 'tis the edifice
I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies !
And where I have enshrined piously
All lovers, whom fell storms have doomed to die
Throughout my bondage."—Thus discoursing, on
They went till unobscured the porches shone ;
Which hurryingly they gained, and entered straight.
Sure never since king Neptune held his state
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars
Has legioned all his battle ; and behold
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold
His even breast : see, many steelèd squares,
And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares
One step ? Imagine further, line by line,
These warrior thousands on the field supine :
So in that crystal place, in silent rows,
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.
The stranger from the mountains, breathless, traced
Such thousands of shut eyes in order placed,
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips
All ruddy—for here death no blossom nips.
He marked their brows and foreheads ; saw their hair
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care ;
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,
Put cross-wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,"
Whispered the guide, stuttering with joy, "even now."

He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,
 Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,
 Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.
 He tore it into pieces small as snow
 That drifts unfeathered when bleak northerns blow,
 And having done it, took his dark blue cloak
 And bound it round Endymion : then struck
 His wand against the empty air times nine.
 " What more there is to do, young man, is thine :
 But first a little patience ; first undo
 This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
 Ah, gentle ! 'tis as weak as spider's skein ;
 And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean ?
 A power overshadows thee ! Oh, brave !
 The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
 Here is a shell ; 'tis pearly blank to me,
 Nor marked with any sign or charactery—
 Canst thou read aught ? O read for pity's sake !
 Olympus ! we are safe ! Now, Carian, break
 This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."

'Twas done : and straight with sudden swell and fall
 Sweet music breathed her soul away, and sighed
 A lullaby to silence.—" Youth ! now strew
 These minced leaves on me, and passing through
 Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
 And thou wilt see the issue."—'Mid the sound
 Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
 Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
 And scattered in his face some fragments light.
 How lightning-swift the change ! a youthful wight
 Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
 Out-sparkling sudden like an up-turned gem,

Appeared, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneeled down beside it, and with tenderest force
Pressed its cold hand, and wept—and Scylla sighed !
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—
The nymph arose : he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.
And, as he passed, each lifted up its head,
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards : 'twas too much :
Death fell a-weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persevered along, and thus
All were reanimated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
Of gladness in the air—while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly ; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gazed upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swelled, and, full-blown, shed full showers
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press oozed out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wandered to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow
Of joy that ever poured from heaven.

——“ Away ! ”

Shouted the new-born god ; “ follow, and pay
Our piety to Neptunus supreme ! ”
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,

They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
Through portal columns of a giant size,
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
Joyous all followed, as the leader called,
Down marble steps ; pouring as easily
As hour-glass sand—and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
And of those numbers every eye was wet ;
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,
Like what was never heard in all the throes
Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit
To tell : 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Moved on for many a league ; and gained and lost
Huge sea-marks ; vanward swelling in array,
And from the rear diminishing away—
Till a faint dawn surprised them. Glaucus cried,
“ Behold ! behold the palace of his pride !
God Neptune's palaces ! ” With noise increased,
They shouldered on towards that brightening east.
At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect—diamond gleams, and golden glows
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,
Still onward ; still the splendour gradual swelled.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld

By jasper pillars letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more near :
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far, far surpassed,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as coloured as the bow
Of Iris, when unfading it doth show
Beyond a silvery shower, with the arch
Through which this Paphian army took its march,
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state :
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,
To which the leaders sped ; but not half-raught
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,
And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne
Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ;
At his right-hand stood wingèd Love, and on
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmèd vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall ; and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,
Awed from the throne aloof ; and when storm-rent
Disclosed the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air ;
But soothed as now, flashed sudden everywhere,

Noiseless, submarine cloudlets, glittering
 Death to a human eye : for there did spring
 From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
 A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
 A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.
 Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread
 As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe
 Of feathered Indian darts about, as through
 The delicatest air : air verily,
 But for the portraiture of clouds and sky :
 This palace floor breath-air—but for the amaze
 Of deep-seen wonders motionless—and blaze
 Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,
 Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang ;
 The Nereids danced ; the Sirens faintly sang ;
 And the great Sea-King bowed his dripping head.
 Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed
 On all the multitude a nectarous dew.
 The ooze-born Goddess beckonèd and drew
 Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ;
 And when they reached the thronèd eminence
 She kist the sea-nymph's cheek—who sat her down
 A-toying with the doves. Then—"Mighty crown
 And sceptre of this kingdom !" Venus said,
 "Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid :
 Behold !"—Two copious tear-drops instant fell
 From the God's large eyes ; he smiled delectable.
 And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.
 "Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands
 Of love ? Now this is cruel. Since the hour
 I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power

Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
 Escaped from dull mortality's harsh net ?
 A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long,
 Or I am skillless quite : an idle tongue,
 A humid eye, and steps luxurious,
 Where these are new and strange, are ominous.
 Ay, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,
 When others were all blind ; and were I given
 To utter secrets, haply I might say
 Some pleasant words :—but Love will have his day.
 So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,
 Even in the passing of thine honeymoon,
 Visit my Cytherea : thou wilt find
 Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind ;
 And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done.
 All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son !”
 Thus the fair goddess : while Endymion
 Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began
 Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran
 In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd ;
 And plundered vines, teeming exhaustless, pleached
 New growth about each shell and pendent lyre ;
 The which, in disentangling for their fire,
 Pulled down fresh foliage and coverture
 For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,
 Fluttered and laughed, and oft-times through the
 throng
 Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,
 And garlanding grew wild ; and pleasure reigned.
 In harmless tendrils they each other chained,
 And strove who should be smothered deepest in
 Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin
 For one so weak to venture his poor verse
 In such a place as this. O do not curse,
 High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending
 Of dulcet instruments came charmingly ;
 And then a hymn.

“ King of the stormy sea !
 Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
 Of elements ! Eternally before
 Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,
 At thy feared trident shrinking, doth unlock
 Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
 All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home
 Of thy capacious bosom ever flow.
 Thou frownest, and old Æolus thy foe
 Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
 Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
 When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
 Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
 Gulfs in the morning light, and scuds along
 To bring thee nearer to that golden song
 Apollo singeth, while his chariot
 Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
 For scenes like this : an empire stern hast thou ;
 And it hath furrowed that large front : yet now,
 As newly come of heaven dost thou sit
 To blend and interknit
 Subdued majesty with this glad time.
 O shell-born King sublime !
 We lay our hearts before thee evermore—
 We sing, and we adore !

" Breathe softly, flutes ;
 Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ;
 Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain ;
 Not flowers budding in an April rain,
 Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow—
 No, nor the Æolian twang of Love's own bow,
 Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
 Of goddess Cytherea !
 Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
 On our soul's sacrifice.

" Bright-winged Child !
 Who has another care when thou hast smiled ?
 Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
 All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast
 Our spirits, fanned away by thy light pinions.
 O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions !
 God of warm pulses, and dishevelled hair,
 And panting bosoms bare !
 Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser
 Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !
 Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until
 We fill—we fill !
 And by thy Mother's lips——"

Was heard no more
 For clamour, when the golden palace door
 Opened again, and from without, in shone
 A new magnificence. On oozy throne
 Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
 To take a latest glimpse at his sheepfold,
 Before he went into his quiet cave
 To muse for ever.—Then a lucid wave,

Scooped from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
 Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty
 Of Doris, and the Ægean seer, her spouse—
 Next on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
 Theban Amphion leaning on his lute :
 His fingers went across it—All were mute
 To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
 And Thetis pearly too.

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion ; seeing he
 Was there far strayed from mortality.
 He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain ;
 Imagination gave a dizzier pain.
 “ O I shall die ! sweet Venus, be my stay !
 Where is my lovely mistress ? Well-away !
 I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing——”
 At Neptune’s feet he sank. A sudden ring
 Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
 To usher back his spirit into life :
 But still he slept. At last they interwove
 Their cradling arms, and purposed to convey
 Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo ! while slow carried through the pitying crowd,
 To his inward senses these words spake aloud ;
 Written in starlight on the dark above :
*Dearest Endymion ! my entire love !
 How have I dwelt in fear of fate : ’tis done—
 Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
 Arise then ! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
 Her ready eggs, before I’ll kissing snatch
 Thee into endless heaven. Awake ! awake !*

The youth at once arose : a placid lake
 Came quiet to his eyes ; and forest green,
 Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,
 Lulled with its simple song his fluttering breast.
 How happy once again in grassy nest !

 BOOK IV.

MUSE of my native land ! loftiest Muse !
 O first-born on the mountains ! by the hues
 Of heaven on the spiritual air begot ;
 Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
 While yet our England was a wolfish den :
 Before our forests heard the talk of men ;
 Before the first of Druids was a child ;
 Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
 Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
 There came an eastern voice of solemn mood ;
 Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
 Apollo's garland :—yet didst thou divine
 Such home-bred glory, that they cried in vain,
 “ Come hither, Sister of the Island ! ” Plain
 Spake fair Ausonia ; and once more she spake
 A higher summons :—still didst thou betake
 Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
 A full accomplishment ! The thing is done,
 Which undone, these our latter days had risen
 On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what
 prison,
 Of flesh and bone, curbs and confines, and frets
 Our spirit's wings : despondency besets

Our pillows ; and the fresh to-morrow morn
 Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
 Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
 Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
 To thee ! But then I thought on poets gone,
 And could not pray :—nor can I now—so on
 I move to the end in lowliness of heart.

“ Ah, woe is me ! that I should fondly part
 From my dear native land ! Ah, foolish maid !
 Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade
 Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields !
 To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
 A bitter coolness : the ripe grape is sour :
 Yet I would have, great gods ! but one short hour
 Of native air—let me but die at home.”

Endymion to heaven's airy dome
 Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,
 When these words reached him. Whereupon he
 bows
 His head through thorny-green entanglement
 Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
 Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

“ Is no one near to help me ? No fair dawn
 Of life from charitable voice ? No sweet saying
 To set my dull and saddened spirit playing ?
 No hand to toy with mine ? No lips so sweet
 That I may worship them ? No eyelids meet
 To twinkle on my bosom ? No one dies
 Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
 Redemption sparkles !—I am sad and lost.”

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost
 Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
 Warm mountaineer ! for canst thou only bear
 A woman's sigh alone and in distress ?
 See not her charms ! Is Phœbe passionless ?
 Phœbe is fairer far—O gaze no more :
 Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
 Behold her panting in the forest grass !
 Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
 For tenderness the arms so idly lain
 Amongst them ? Feelest not a kindred pain,
 To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
 After some warm delight, that seems to perch
 Dove-like in the dim cell lying beyond
 Their upper lids ?—Hist !

“O for Hermes' wand,

To touch this flower into human shape !
 That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
 From his green prison, and here kneeling down
 Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown !
 Ah me, how I could love !—My soul doth melt
 For the unhappy youth—Love ! I have felt
 So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
 To what my own full thoughts had made too
 tender,
 That but for tears my life had fled away !
 Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
 And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
 There is no lightning, no authentic dew
 But in the eye of love : there's not a sound,
 Melodious howsoever, can confound
 The heavens and earth in one to such a death
 As doth the voice of love : there's not a breath

Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
Of passion from the heart !”

Upon a bough
He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
Thirst for another love : O impious,
That he can even dream upon it thus !
Thought he, “ Why am I not as are the dead,
Since to a woe like this I have been led
Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous
sea ?

Goddess ! I love thee not the less : from thee
By Juno’s smile I turn not—no, no, no—
While the great waters are at ebb and flow.
I have a triple soul ! O fond pretence—
For both, for both my love is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut for them in twain.”

And so he groaned, as one by beauty slain.
The lady’s heart beat quick, and he could see
Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
He sprang from his green covert : there she lay,
Sweet as a musk rose upon new made hay ;
With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.
“ Fair damsel, pity me ! forgive that I
Thus violate thy bower’s sancity !
O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel ! fairest thief !
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,

Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
 And all my story that much passion slew me ;
 Do smile upon the evening of my days :
 And, for my tortured brain begins to craze,
 Be thou my nurse ; and let me understand
 How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.
 Dost weep for me ? Then should I be content.
 Scowl on, ye fates ! until the firmament
 Outblackens Erebus, and the full-caverned earth
 Crumbles into itself. By the cloud-girth
 Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
 To meet oblivion."—As her heart would burst
 The maiden sobbed awhile, and then replied :
 " Why must such desolation betide
 As that thou speakest of ? Are not these green
 nooks
 Empty of all misfortune ? Do the brooks
 Utter a gorgon voice ? Does yonder thrush,
 Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
 About the dewy forest, whisper tales ?
 Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
 Will slime the rose to-night. Though if thou wilt,
 Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
 Not to companion thee, and sigh away
 The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day !"
 " Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past :
 I love thee ! and my days can never last.
 That I may pass in patience still speak :
 Let me have music dying, and I seek
 No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
 Didst thou not after other climates call,
 And murmur about Indian streams ?"—Then she,
 Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
 For pity sang this roundelay—

L

" O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ?
 To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes ?
 Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips ?

" O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ?
 To give the glow-worm light ?
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on siren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

" O sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue ?
 To give at evening pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou may'st listen the cold dews among ?

" O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May ?
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head,
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
 Nor any drooping flower
 Held sacred for thy bower,
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

" To Sorrow,
 I bade good-morrow,
 And thought to leave her far away behind ;

But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly ;
She is so constant to me, and so kind :
I would deceive her,
And so leave her,
But ah ! she is so constant and so kind.

“ Beneath my palm-trees by the river side,
I sat a-weeping : in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

“ Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
I sat a-weeping : what enamoured bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm-trees by a river side ?

“ And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers : the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
’Twas Bacchus and his crew !
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
’Twas Bacchus and his kin !

“ Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crowned with green leaves, and faces all on flame ;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
To scare thee, Melancholy !
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name !
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly

By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon :
I rushed into the folly !

“ Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing ;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite ;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass,
Tipsily quaffing.

“ Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye !
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate ?—
' We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,
A-conquering !
Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :
Come hither, lady fair, and joinèd be
To our wild minstrelsy !'

“ Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye !
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?
' For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
For wine we left our heath and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms ;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth !

Come hither, lady fair, and joinèd be
To our mad minstrelsy !'

“ Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,

With Asian elephants :

Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil ;
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

“ Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains ;
A three days' journey in a moment done ;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

“ I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown !
I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring !
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce !
The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearlèd hail ;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans ;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.

Into these regions came I following him,
 Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
 To stray away into these forests drear
 Alone, without a peer :
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

 “ Young Stranger !
 I've been a ranger
 In search of pleasure throughout every clime.
 Alas, 'tis not for me !
 Bewitched I sure must be,
 To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

 “ Come then, Sorrow !
 Sweetest Sorrow !
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast ;
 I thought to leave thee,
 And deceive thee,
 But now of all the world I love thee best.

 “ There is not one—
 No, no, not one
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
 Thou art her mother,
 And her brother,
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.”

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
 And look, quite dead to every worldly thing !
 Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her ;
 And listened to the wind that now did stir
 About the crispèd oaks full drearily,
 Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
 Remembered from its velvet summer song.

At last he said—"Poor lady, how thus long
Have I been able to endure that voice ?
Fair Melody ! kind Siren ! I've no choice ;
I must be thy sad servant evermore :
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
Alas, I must not think—by Phœbe, no !
Let me not think, soft Angel ! shall it be so ?
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think ?
O thou couldst foster me beyond the brink
Of recollection ! make my watchful care
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair !
Do gently murder half my soul, and I
Shall feel the other half so utterly !
I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth ;
O let it blush so ever ! let it soothe
My madness ! let it mantle rosy-warm
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is ;
And this is sure thine other softling—this
Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near !
Wilt fall asleep ? O let me sip that tear !
And whisper one sweet word that I may know
This is this world—sweet dewy blossom !" — *Woe !
Woe ! Woe to that Endymion ! Where is he ?*
Even these words went echoing dismally
Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
Like one repenting in his latest moan ;
And while it died away a shade passed by,
As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly
Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek
forth
Their timid necks and tremble ; so these both
Leant to each other trembling, and sat so
Waiting for some destruction—when lo !

Foot-feathered Mercury appeared sublime
Beyond the tall tree-tops ; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hailstorm, down he dropt
Towards the ground ; but rested not, nor stopt
One moment from his home : only the sward
He with his wand light touched, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear ;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.
The youth of Caria placed the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhaled to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untired.
Muse of my native land, am I inspired ?
This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here ; nor do I dread
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous : I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid ?
There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils boid

Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire !

There curled a purple mist around them ; soon,
It seemed as when around the pale new moon
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow ;
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow.
For the first time, since he came nigh dead-born
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn ; for the first time,
He left aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian
There came a dream, showing how a young man,
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintry skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckoned of his house.
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,
Diversely tinged with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought ;
And scarcely for one moment could be caught
His sluggish form reposing motionless,
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress
Of vision searched for him, as one would look
Athwart the shallows of a river nook
To catch a glance at silver-throated eels,
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they fostered are
 Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
 Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop ;
 Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
 Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead—
 And on those pinions, level in mid-air,
 Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
 Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
 Upon a calm sea drifting ; and meanwhile
 The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold ! he walks
 On heaven's pavement ; brotherly he talks
 To divine powers : from his hand full fain
 Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain :
 He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,
 And asketh where the golden apples grow :
 Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
 And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
 A Jovian thunderbolt : arch Hebe brings
 A full-brimmed goblet, dances lightly, sings
 And tantalises long ; at last he drinks,
 And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
 Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.
 He blows a bugle—an ethereal band
 Are visible above : the Seasons four—
 Green-kirtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store
 In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,
 Join dance with shadowy Hours ; while still the blast,
 In swells unmitigated, still doth last
 To sway their floating morris. " Whose is this ?
 Whose bugle ? " he inquires : they smile—" O Dis !
 Why is this mortal here ? Dost thou not know
 Its mistress' lips ? Not thou ?—'Tis Dian's : lo !
 She rises crescented ! " He looks, 'tis she,
 His very goddess : good-bye earth, and sea,

And air, and pains, and care, and suffering ;
 Good-bye to all but love ! Then doth he spring
 Towards her, and awakes—and strange, o'erhead,
 Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
 Beheld awake his very dream : the gods
 Stood smiling ; merry Hebe laughs and nods ;
 And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.
 O state perplexing ! On the pinion bed,
 Too well awake, he feels the panting side
 Of his delicious lady. He who died
 For soaring too audacious in the sun,
 Where that same treacherous wax began to run,
 Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
 His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
 To that fair shadowed passion pulsed its way—
 Ah, what perplexity ! Ah, well-a-day !
 So fond, so beauteous was his bedfellow,
 He could not help but kiss her : then he grew
 Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
 Young Phœbe's, golden haired ; and so 'gan crave
 Forgiveness ; yet he turned once more to look
 At the sweet sleeper—all his soul was shook—
 She pressed his hand in slumber ; so once more
 He could not help but kiss her and adore.
 At this the shadow wept, melting away.
 The Latmian started up : " Bright goddess, stay !
 Search my most hidden breast ! By truth's own
 tongue,
 I have no dædale heart : why is it wrung
 To desperation ? Is there naught for me,
 Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery ! "

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses :
 Her dawning love-look rapt Enymion blesses

With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from underneath.
 "Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
 This murky phantasm ! thou contented seem'st
 Pillowed in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
 What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
 Ah, should'st thou die from my heart-treachery !
 Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul
 Hath no revenge in it : as it is whole
 In tenderness, would I were whole in love !
 Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,
 Even when I feel as true as innocence ?
 I do, I do.—What is this soul then ? Whence
 Came it ? It does not seem my own, and I
 Have no self-passion or identity.
 Some fearful end must be : where, where is it ?
 By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
 Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet :
 Shall we away ?" He roused the steeds : they beat
 Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
 Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,
 And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
 In the dusk heavens silvery, when they
 Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
 Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
 Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
 In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
 Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
 So witless of their doom, that verily
 'Tis well-nigh past man's search their hearts to see ;
 Whether they wept, or laughed, or grieved, or toyed—
 Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloyed.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
 The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
 No bigger than an unobservèd star,
 Or tiny point of fairy scimitar ;
 Bright signal that she only stooped to tie
 Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
 She bowed into the heavens her timid head.
 Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
 While to his lady meek the Carian turned,
 To mark if her dark eyes had yet discerned
 This beauty in its birth.—Despair ! despair !
 He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
 In the cold moonshine. Straight he seized her
 wrist ;
 It melted from his grasp : her hand he kissed,
 And, horror ! kissed his own—he was alone.
 Her steed a little higher soared, and then
 Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,
 Beyond the seeming confines of the space
 Made for the soul to wander in and trace
 Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
 Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
 Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
 One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
 Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart !
 And in these regions many a venom'd dart
 At random flies ; they are the proper home
 Of every ill : the man is yet to come
 Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
 But few have ever felt how calm and well
 Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
 There anguish does not sting ; nor pleasure pall :

Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtained bier
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
Who strive therefore : on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him ; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—
Young Semele such richness never quaffed
In her maternal longing. Happy gloom !
Dark Paradise ! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by dew ; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate ; where hopes infest ;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-home ! O wondrous soul !
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian !
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content : a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Ay, his lulled soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed ; and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going,
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feathered horse : with fierce alarm
He flapped towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had viewed
A skyey mask, a pinioned multitude—
And silvery was its passing : voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet

The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,
While past the vision went in bright array :

“ Who, who from Dian’s feast would be away ?

For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left ! Who, who away would be
From Cynthia’s wedding and festivity ?
Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !
Ah, Zephyrus ! art here, and Flora too !
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

Your baskets high

With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme ;
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gathered in the dewy morning : hie

Away ! fly ! fly !

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius ! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams ’stead of feathered wings,
Two fan-like fountains—thine illuminings

For Dian play :

Dissolve the frozen purity of air ;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
Show cold through watery pinions ; make more bright
The Star-Queen’s crescent on her marriage night :

Haste, haste away !

Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see !
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery :

A third is in the race ! who is the third,
 Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?
 The ramping Centaur !
 The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !
 The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
 Some enemy : far forth his brow is bent
 Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,
 Pale unrelentor,
 When he shall hear the wedding lutes a-playing
 Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying
 So timidly among the stars : come hither !
 Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither
 They all are going.
 Danaë's Son, before Jove newly bowed,
 Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
 Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :
 Ye shall for ever live and love, for all
 Thy tears are flowing.
 By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo ! "

More

Endymion heard not : down his steed him bore,
 Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
 " Alas ! " said he, " were I but always borne
 Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn
 A path in hell, for ever would I bless
 Horrors which nourish an uneasiness
 For my own sullen conquering : to him
 Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
 Sorrow is but a shadow : now I see
 The grass ; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me !
 It is thy voice—divinest ! Where ?—who ? who
 Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew ?

Behold upon this happy earth we are ;
Let us aye love each other ; let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny !
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
Where didst thou melt to ? By thee will I sit
For ever : let our fate stop here—a kid
I on this spot will offer : Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, loved a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream ? O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie,
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone ! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired : so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.
There never lived a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starved and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing : gone and past
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell !
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas ! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast. •
Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.

On earth I may not love thee ; and therefore
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
All through the teeming year : so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss !
My river-lily bud ! one human kiss !
One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's-nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood !
Whither didst melt ! Ah, what of that !—all good
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming. Now,
Where shall our dwelling be ? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none ;
And where dark yew-trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet-berry cups of dew ?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place ;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclined :
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou fird,
And by another, in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
Honey from out the gnarlèd hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,
And sorrel untorn by the dew-clawed stag :
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak ;
Still let me dive into the joy I seek—
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill

With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire ;
And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre ;
To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear ;
To Vesper, for a taper silver clear,
That I may see thy beauty through the night ;
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light
Tame on thy finger ; to the River-gods,
And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness !
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee :
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice :
And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,
Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
Say, is not bliss within our perfect seizure ?
O that I could not doubt !”

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
His briared path to some tranquillity.
It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,

And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow ;
Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
Beamed upward from the valleys of the east :
“ O that the flutter of this heart had ceased,
Or the sweet name of love had passed away.
Young feathered tyrant ! by a swift decay
Wilt thou devote this body to the earth :
And I do think that at my very birth
I lisped thy blooming titles inwardly ;
For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
With uplift hands I blessed the stars of heaven.
Art thou not cruel ? Ever have I striven
To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do !
When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
To the void air, bidding them find out love :
But when I came to feel how far above
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
All earthly pleasure, all imagined good,
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss—
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
And languished there three days. Ye milder powers,
Am I not cruelly wronged ? Believe—believe
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife !
I may not be thy love : I am forbidden—
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden
By things I tremble at, and gorgon wrath.
Twice hast thou asked whither I went : henceforth
Ask me no more ! I may not utter it,
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
Ourselves at once to vengeance ; we might die ;

We might embrace and die—voluptuous thought !
 Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
 In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
 No, no, that shall not be ; thee will I bless,
 And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word returned : but love-lorn, silent, wan,
 Into the valleys green together went.
 Far wandering, they were perforce content
 To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree ;
 Nor at each other gazed, but heavily
 Pored on its hazel cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion ! unhappy ! it nigh grieves
 Me to behold thee thus in last extreme :
 Enskied ere this, but truly that I deem
 Truth the best music in a first-born song.
 Thy lute-voiced brother will I sing ere long,
 And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me ?
 Yes, moonlight Emperor ! felicity
 Has been thy meed for many thousand years ;
 Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
 Mourned as if yet thou wert a forester ;
 Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse
 Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
 Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
 Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
 A little onward ran the very stream
 By which he took his first soft poppy dream ;

And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
 A crescent he had carved, and round it spent
 His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
 Had swollen and greened the pious charactery,
 But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
 Up which he had not feared the antelope ;
 And not a tree beneath whose rooty shade
 He had not with his tamèd leopards played :
 Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
 Fly in the air where his had never been—
 And yet he knew it not.

O treachery !

Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
 With all his sorrowing ? He sees her not.
 But who so stares on him ? His sister sure !
 Peona of the woods ! Can she endure !—
 Impossible—how dearly they embrace !
 His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ;
 It is no treachery.

“ Dear brother mine !

Endymion, weep not so ! Why shouldst thou pine
 When all great Latmos so exalt will be ;
 Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly ,
 And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.
 Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
 Of grief to last thee to my kiss again.
 Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
 Come hand-in-hand with one so beautiful.
 Be happy both of you ! for I will pull
 The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
 Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls ;
 And when he is restored, thou, fairest dame,
 Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame

To see ye thus—not very, very sad ?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad :
O feel as if it were a common day ;
Free-voiced as one who never was away.
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye ? but ye shall
Be gods of your own rest imperial,
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
Into the hours that have passed us by,
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
O Hermes ! on this very night will be
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light ;
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
Good visions in the air—whence will befall,
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks ; and furthermore,
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore :
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
Many upon thy death have ditties made ;
And many, even now, their foreheads shade
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows.
Tell me, my lady queen, how to espouse
This wayward brother to his rightful joys !
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say
What ails thee ?” He could bear no more, and so
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
And twanged it inwardly, and calmly said :
“ I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid !
My only visitor ! not ignorant though,
That those deceptions which for pleasure go

'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be :
But there are higher ones I may not see,
If impiously an earthly realm I take.
Since I saw thee I have been wide awake
Night after night, and day by day, until
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
More happy than betides mortality.
A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well ;
For to thy tongue will I all health confide,
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
Peona, mayst return to me. I own
This may sound strangely : but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair !
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister's love with me ?" Like one resigned
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown :
" Ay, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Dian :—truth I heard !
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
Behold I find it ! so exalted too !
So after my own heart ! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it :
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number

Of Dian's sisterhood ; and, kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt :
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
After a little sleep : or when in mine,
Far underground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know him not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very
fear ;

Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
Endymion said : " Are not our fates all cast ?
Why stand we here ? Adieu, ye tender pair !
Adieu ! " Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,
Walked dizzily away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulf for ever. " Stay ! " he cried, " ah, stay !
Turn, damsels ! hist ! one word I have to say :
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on : so I'd fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
Into those holy groves, that silent are
Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
At vespers earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again——." At this he pressed
His hands against his face, and then did rest

His head upon a mossy hillock green,
And so remained as he a corpse had been
All the long day ; save when he scantily lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time—sluggish and weary
Unto the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reached the river's brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walked towards the temple grove with this lament :
“ Why such a golden eve ? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die ; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour-roses ;
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it : so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,
What is there to plain off ? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly served.” So saying, he
Tripped lightly on, in sort of deathful glee ;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been : nor had he done
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,
Until that grove appeared, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober seemlied
Gave utterance as he entered : “ Ha ! ” he said,

“ King of the butterflies ; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy ;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious.” So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found ;
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drowned
Beyond the reach of music : for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
Nor muffling thicket interposed to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles,
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
Wan as primroses gathered at midnight
By chilly-fingered spring. “ Unhappy wight !
Endymion ! ” said Peona, “ we are here !
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier ? ”
Then he embraced her, and his lady's hand
Pressed, saying : “ Sister, I would have command,
If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate.”
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
To Endymion's amaze : “ By Cupid's dove,
And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth
Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth ! ”
And as she spake, into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame :
Her long black hair swelled ampler, in display
Full golden : in her eyes a brighter day

Dawned blue and full of love. Ay, he beheld
Phœbe, his passion ! joyous she upheld
Her lucid bow, continuing thus : “ Drear, drear
Has our delaying been ; but foolish fear
Withheld me first ; and thou decrees of fate ;
And then ’twas fit that from this mortal state
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlooked-for change
Be spiritualised. Peona, we shall range
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
As was thy cradle ; hither shalt thou flee
To meet us many a time.” Next Cynthia bright
Peona kissed, and blessed with fair good night :
Her brother kissed her too, and knelt adown
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanished far away !—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.





SONNETS.



I.

TO ———.

HAD I a man's fair form, then might my sighs
Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell
Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart ; so well
Would passion arm me for the enterprise :
But ah ! I am no knight whose foeman dies ;
No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell ;
I am no happy shepherd of the dell
Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes.
Yet must I dote upon thee—call thee sweet,
Sweeter by far than Hybla's honeyed roses
When steeped in dew rich to intoxication.
Ah ! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet,
And when the moon her pallid face discloses,
I'll gather some by spells and incantation.

II.

WRITTEN ON THE DAY THAT MR. LEIGH
HUNT LEFT PRISON.

WHAT though, for showing truth to flattered
 state,
 Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
 In his immortal spirit, been as free
 As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
 Minion of grandeur ! think you he did wait ?
 Think you he naught but prison walls did see
 Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key ?
 Ah, no ! far happier, nobler was his fate !
 In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,
 Culling enchanted flowers ; and he flew
 With daring Milton through the fields of air :
 To regions of his own his genius true
 Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
 When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew ?

III.

HOW many bards gild the lapses of time !
 A few of them have ever been the food
 Of my delighted fancy—I could brood
 Over their beauties, earthly or sublime :
 And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,
 These will in throngs before my mind intrude :
 But no confusion, no disturbance rude
 Do they occasion ; 'tis a pleasing chime.

So the unnumbered sounds that evening store ;
 The song of birds—the whisp'ring of the leaves—
 The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves
 With solemn sound—and thousand others more,
 That distance of recognisance bereaves,
 Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

IV.

TO G. A. W.

NYMPH of the downward smile, and sidelong
 glance,
 In what diviner moments of the day
 Art thou most lovely ? When gone far astray
 Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance ?
 Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
 Of sober thought ? Or when starting away,
 With careless robe, to meet the morning ray,
 Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance ?
 Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
 And so remain, because thou listenest :
 But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
 That I can never tell what mood is best.
 I shall as soon pronounce which grace more neatly
 Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

V.

O SOLITUDE ! if I must with thee dwell,
 Let it not be among the jumbled heap
 Of murky buildings ; climb with me the steep—

Nature's observatory—whence the dell,
 Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
 May seem a span ; let me thy vigils keep
 'Mongst boughs pavilioned, where the deer's swift
 leap

Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.
 But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
 Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
 Whose words are images of thoughts refined,
 Is my soul's pleasure ; and it sure must be
 Almost the highest bliss of human kind,
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

 VI.

TO one who has been long in city pent,
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven—to breathe a prayer
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
 And gentle tale of love and languishment ?
 Returning home at evening, with an ear
 Catching the notes of Philomel—an eye
 Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by :
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
 That falls through the clear ether silently.

VII.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demense ;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;
 Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

VIII.

ON LEAVING SOME FRIENDS AT AN EARLY
HOUR.

GIVE me a golden pen, and let me lean
 On heaped-up flowers, in regions clear, and
 far ;
 Bring me a tablet whiter than a star,
 Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen
 The silver strings of heavenly harp atween :
 N

And let there glide by many a pearly car,
 Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar,
 And half-discovered wings, and glances keen.
 The while let music wander round my ears,
 And as it reaches each delicious ending,
 Let me write down a line of glorious tone,
 And full of many wonders of the spheres :
 For what a height my spirit is contending !
 'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

IX.

ADDRESSED TO HAYDON.

HIGH-MINDEDNESS, a jealousy for good,
 A loving-kindness for the great man's fame,
 Dwells here and there with people of no name,
 In noisome alley, and in pathless wood :
 And where we think the truth least understood,
 Oft may be found a "singleness of aim,"
 That ought to frighten into hooded shame
 A money-mong'ring, pitiable brood.
 How glorious this affection for the cause
 Of steadfast genius, toiling gallantly !
 What when a stout unbending champion awes
 Envy and Malice to their native sty ?
 Unnumbered souls breathe out a still applauso,
 Proud to behold him in his country's eye.

x.

ADDRESSED TO THE SAME.

GREAT spirits now on earth are sojourning ;
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing :
 He of the rose, the violet, the spring,
 The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake :
 And lo !—whose steadfastness would never take
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
 And other spirits there are standing apart
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;
 These, these will give the world another heart,
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
 Of mighty workings ?—
 Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb.

xi.

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET.

THE poetry of earth is never dead :
 When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;
 That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
 In summer luxury—he has never done
 With his delights ; for when tired out with fun
 He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never :
 On a lone winter evening, when the frost
 Has wrought a silence, from the stove there
 shrills
 The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
 And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
 The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

 XII.

TO KOSCIUSKO.

GOOD Kosciusko, thy great name alone
 Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling ;
 It comes upon us like the glorious pealing
 Of the wide spheres—an everlasting tone.
 And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown,
 The name of heroes, burst from clouds concealing,
 And changed to harmonies, for ever stealing
 Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne.
 It tells me too, that on a happy day,
 When some good spirit walks upon the earth,
 Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore
 Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth
 To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away
 To where the great God lives for evermore.

XIII.

HAPPY is England ! I could be content
To see no other verdure than its own ;
To feel no other breezes than are blown
Through its tall woods with high romances blent ;
Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment
For skies Italian, and an inward groan
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
And half forget what world or worlding meant.
Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters ;
Enough their simple loveliness for me,
Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging :
Yet do I often warmly burn to see
Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,
And float with them about the summer waters.

XIV.

ON THE ELGIN MARBLES.

MY spirit is too weak ; mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of Godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep,
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such din-conceivèd glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an indescribable feud ;

So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
 Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main
 A sun, a shadow of a magnitude.

 xv.

ENCLOSING THE PRECEDING SONNET.

HAYDON ! forgive me that I cannot speak
 Definitely of these mighty things ;
 Forgive me, that I have not eagle's wings,
 That what I want I know not where to seek.
 And think that I would not be over-meeke,
 In rolling out upfollowed thunderings,
 Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,
 Were I of ample strength for such a freak.
 Think too, that all these numbers should be thine ;
 Whose else ? In this who touch thy vesture's hem ?
 For, when men stared at what was most divine
 With brainless idiotism and o'erwise phlegm,
 Thou hadst beheld the full Hesperian shine
 Of their star in the east, and gone to worship them !



XVI.

A DREAM,

AFTER READING DANTE'S EPISODE OF PAULO AND
FRANCESCA.

AS Hermes once took to his feathers light,
When lullèd Argus, baffled, swooned and slept ;
So on a Delphic reed my idle sprite
So played, so charmed, so conquered, so bereft
The dragon world of all its hundred eyes ;
And seeing it asleep, so fled away—
Not unto Ida, with its snow-cold skies ;
Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day—
But to that second circle of sad hell,
Where, 'mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flow
Of rain and hailstones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw ;
Pale were the lips I kissed, and fair the form
I floated with about that melancholy storm.

XVII.

AFTER dark vapours have oppress'd our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.
The anxious month, relieved from its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May,
The eyelids with the passing coolness play,
Like rose leaves with the drip of summer rains.

And calmest thoughts come round us—as, of leaves
 Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—autumn suns
 Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—
 Sweet Sappho's cheek—a sleeping infant's breath—
 The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs—
 A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death.

XVIII.

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK SPACE OF A LEAF AT THE END
 OF CHAUCER'S TALE OF "THE FLOWRE AND THE LEFE."

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse ;
 The honied lines so freshly interlace,
 To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
 So that he here and there full-hearted stops ;
 And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
 Come cool and suddenly against his face,
 And, by the wandering melody, may trace
 Which way the tender-leggèd linnet hops.
 Oh ! what a power has white simplicity !
 What mighty power has this gentle story !
 I that do ever feel athirst for glory,
 Could at this moment be content to lie
 Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
 Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

XIX.

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER.

COME hither, all sweet maidens soberly,
 Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light,
 Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
 And meekly let your fair hands join'd be,
 As if so gentle that ye could not see,
 Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,
 Sinking away to his young spirit's night,
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea :
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
 O horrid dream ! see how his body dips
 Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile :
 He's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath !

XX.

THE HUMAN SEASONS.

FOUR seasons fill the measure of the year ;
 There are four seasons in the mind of man :
 He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span :
 He has his Summer, when luxuriously
 Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves
 To ruminare, and by such dreaming high
 Is nearest unto heaven : quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
 He furlerh close ; contented so to look
 On mists in idleness—to let fair things
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
 He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
 Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

XXI.

TO AILSA ROCK.

HEARKEN, thou craggy ocean pyramid !
 Give answer from thy voice, the sea-fowls' screams !
 When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams ?
 When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid ?
 How long is't since the mighty power bid
 Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams ?
 Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams,
 Or, when grey clouds are thy cold cover-lid ?
 Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead asleep !
 Thy life is but two dead eternities—
 The last in air, the former in the deep ;
 First with the whales, last with the eagle-skies—
 Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee sleep,
 Another cannot wake thy giant size.





ISABELLA ;
OR, THE POT OF BASIL.

A STORY FROM BOCCACCIO.

I.

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel !
Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye !
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady ;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothèd each to be the other by ;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still ;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill ;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her than noise of trees or hidden rill ;

Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoiled her half-done broidery with the same.

III.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
Before the door had given her to his eyes ;
And from her chamber-window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies ;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
Because her face was turned to the same skies ;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June ;
“ To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon.”
“ O may I never see another night,
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.”
So spake they to their pillows ; but, alas !
Honeyless days and days did he let pass ;

V.

Until sweet Isabella's untouched cheek
Fell sick within the rose's just domain ;
Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
By every lull to cool her infant's pain :
“ How ill she is,” said he, “ I may not speak,
And yet I will, and tell my love all plain :
If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
And at the least 'twill startle off her cares.”

VI.

So said he one fair morning, and all day
 His heart beat awfully against his side ;
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray
 For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide
 Stifled his voice, and pulsed resolve away—
 Fevered his high conceit of such a bride,
 Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :
 Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

VII.

So once more he had waked and anguished
 A dreary night of love and misery,
 If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
 To every symbol on his forehead high ;
 She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
 And straight all flushed : so lispèd tenderly,
 " Lorenzo ! "—here she ceased her timid quest,
 But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII.

" O Isabella, I can half perceive
 That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;
 If thou didst ever anything believe,
 Believe how I love thee, believe how near
 My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve
 Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
 Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live
 Another night, and not my passion shrive.

IX.

" Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
 Lady ! thou ledest me to summer clime,

And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time."
 So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
 And poesièd with hers in dewy rhyme :
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

X.

Parting they seemed to tread upon the air,
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
 Only to meet again more close, and share
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
 Sang, of delicious love and honeyed dart ;
 He with light steps went up a western hill,
 And badè the sūn farewell, and joyed his fill.

XI.

All close they met again, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
 Ah ! better had it been for ever so,
 Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be—
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read ;

Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love,
The little sweet doth kill much bitterness ;
Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
And Isabella's was a great distress,
Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
Was not embalmed, this truth is not the less—
Even bees, the little almsmen of spring bowers,
Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enrichèd from ancestral merchandise,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torchèd mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quivered loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip ; with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark ;
For them his ears gushed blood ; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts ; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark :
Half-ignorant, they turned an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI.

Why were they proud ? Because their marble founts
 Gushed with more pride than do a wretch's tears ?
 Why were they proud ? Because fair orange-mounts
 Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs ?
 Why were they proud ? Because red-lined accounts
 Were richer than the songs of Grecian years ?
 Why were they proud ? again we ask aloud,
 Why in the name of Glory were they proud ?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
 In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
 As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
 Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies ;
 The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
 And panniered mules for ducats and old lies—
 Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away—
 Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
 Fair Isabella in her downy nest ?
 How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
 A straying from his toil ? Hot Egypt's pest
 Into their vision covetous and sly !
 How could these money-bags see east and west ?
 Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
 Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio !
 Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,

And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
 And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
 And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
 Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,
 For venturing syllables that ill beseem
 The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
 Shall move on soberly, as it is meet ;
 There is no other crime, no mad assail
 To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet :
 But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
 To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet ;
 To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
 An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

XXI.

These brethren having found by many signs
 What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
 And how she loved him too, each unconfines
 His bitter thoughts to other, well-nigh mad
 That he, the servant of their trade designs,
 Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
 When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
 To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII.

And many a jealous conference had they,
 And many times they bit their lips alone,
 Before they fixed upon a surest way
 To make the youngster for his crime atone ;
 And at the last, these men of cruel clay
 Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone :

For they resolvèd in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sunrise, o'er the balustrade
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dews ; and to him said—
“ You seem there in the quiet of content,
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV.

“ To-day we purpose—ay, this hour we mount
To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine.”
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
Bowed a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ;
And went in haste to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

XXV.

And as he to the courtyard passed along,
Each third step did he pause, and listened oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an indoor lattice, all delight.

XXVI.

“Love, Isabel !” said he, “I was in pain
Lest I should miss to bid thee a good-morrow :
Ah ! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
Of a poor three hours’ absence ? but we’ll gain
Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
Good-bye ! I’ll soon be back.”—“Good-bye !” said she :
And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII.

So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno’s stream
Gurgles through straitened banks, and still doth fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
The brothers’ faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo’s flush with love. They passed the water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
There in that forest did his great love cease ;
Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert bloodhounds of such sin :
They dipped their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsèd spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
Lorenzo had ta’en ship for foreign lands,

Because of some great urgency and need
 In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
 Poor girl ! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
 And 'scape at once from Hope's accursèd bands ;
 To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
 And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be ;
 Sorely she wept until the night came on,
 And then, instead of love, O misery !
 She brooded o'er the luxury alone :
 His image in the dusk she seemed to see,
 And to the silence made a gentle moan,
 Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
 And on her couch low murmuring, " Where ? O
 where ? "

XXXI.

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
 Its fiery vigil in her single breast ;
 She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
 Upon the time with feverish unrest—
 Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
 Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
 Came tragic ; passion not to be subdued,
 And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII.

In the mid-days of autumn, on their eyes
 The breath of winter comes from far away,
 And the sick west continually bereaves
 Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay

Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
 To make all bare before he dares to stray
 From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
 By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII.

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
 She asked her brothers, with an eye all pale,
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
 Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale
 Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;
 And every night in dreams they groaned aloud,
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
 Which saves a sick man from the feathered pall
 For some few gasping moments; like a lance,
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
 Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV.

It was a vision. In the drowsy gloom,
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
 Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
 Had marred his glossy hair which once could shoot
 Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
 Had made a miry channel for his tears.

XXXVI.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake ;
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,
 And Isabella on its music hung :
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
 As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung ;
 And through it moaned a ghostly under-song,
 Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
 From the poor girl by magic of their light,
 The while it did unthread the horrid woof
 Of the late darkened time—the murderous spite
 Of pride and avarice—the dark pine roof
 In the forest—and the sodden turféd dell,
 Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII.

Saying, moreover, “ Isabel, my sweet !
 Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
 And a large flint stone weighs upon my feet ;
 Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
 Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheepfold bleat
 Comes from beyond the river to my bed ;
 Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
 And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX.

“ I am a shadow now, alas ! alas !
 Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling

Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,
 While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
 And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
 And many a chapel-bell the hour is telling,
 Paining me through ; those sounds grow strange to me,
 And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL.

“I know what was, I feel full well what is,
 And I should rage, if spirits could go mad ;
 Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
 That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
 A seraph chosen from the bright abyss
 To be my spouse : thy paleness makes me glad ;
 Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
 A greater love through all my essence steal.”

XLI.

The Spirit mourned “Adieu !”—dissolved, and left
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil ;
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
 We put our eyes into a pillow cleft,
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil,
 It made sad Isabella’s eyelids ache,
 And in the dawn she started up awake ;

XLII.

“Ha ! ha !” said she, “I knew not this hard life,
 I thought the worst was simple misery ;
 I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
 Portioned us—happy days, or else to die ;

But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife !
 Sweet Spirit, thou hast schooled my infancy :
 I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies."

XLIII.

When the full morning came, she had devised
 How she might secret to the forest hie ;
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
 And sing to it one latest lullaby ;
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.
 Resolved, she took with her an aged nurse,
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV.

See, as they creep along the river side,
 How she doth whisper to that aged dame,
 And, after looking round the champaign wide,
 Shows her a knife. "What feverous hectic flame
 Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee betide,
 That thou shouldst smile again?" The evening
 came,
 And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed ;
 The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV.

Who hath not loitered in a green churchyard,
 And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
 Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
 To see skull, confined bones, and funeral stole ;
 Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marred,
 Aud filling it once more with human soul ?

Ah ! this is holiday to what was felt
 When Isabella by Lorenzo kuelt.

XLVI.

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
 One glance did fully all its secrets tell ;
 Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
 Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well ;
 Upon the murderous spot she seemed to grow
 Like to a native lily of the dell :
 Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
 To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII.

Soon she turned up a soiled glove, whereon
 Her silk had played in purple fantasies.
 She kissed it with a lip more chill than stone,
 And put it in her bosom, where it dries
 And freezes utterly unto the bone
 Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :
 Then 'gan she work again ; nor stayed her care,
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
 Until her heart felt pity to the core
 At sight of such a dismal labouring,
 And so she kneelèd, with her locks all hoar,
 And put her lean hands to the horrid thing :
 Three hours they laboured at this travail sore ;
 At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
 And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX.

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ?
 Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?
 O for the gentleness of old Romance,
 The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !
 Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
 For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
 To speak :—O turn thee to the very tale,
 And taste the music of that vision pale.

L.

With duller steel than the Persèan sword
 They cut away no formless monster's head,
 But one whose gentleness did well accord
 With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
 Love never dies, but lives, immortal lord :
 If Love impersonate was ever dead,
 Pale Isabella kissed it, and low moaned.
 'Twas love ; cold—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

LI.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
 And then the prize was all for Isabel :
 She calmed its wild hair with a golden comb,
 And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
 Pointed each fringed lash ; the smeared loam
 With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
 She drenched away : and still she combed, and kept
 Sighing all day—and still she kissed and wept.

LII.

Then in a silken scarf—sweet with the dews
 Of precious flowers, plucked in Araby,

And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
 Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully—
 She wrapped it up ; and for its tomb did choose
 A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
 And covered it with mould, and o'er it set
 Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
 And she forgot the blue above the trees,
 And she forgot the dells where waters run,
 And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;
 She had no knowledge when the day was done,
 And the new morn she saw not : but in peace
 Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
 And moistened it with tears unto the core.

LIV.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
 Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
 So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
 Of Basil-tufts in Florence ; for it drew
 Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
 From the fast-mouldering head there shut from
 view :
 So that the jewel, safely casketed,
 Came forth, and in perfumèd leaflets spread.

LV.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile !
 O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
 O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
 Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !

Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile ;
 Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
 And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
 Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

LVI.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
 From the deep throat of sad Melpomene !
 Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
 And touch the strings into a mystery ;
 Sound mournfully upon the winds and low ;
 For simple Isabel is soon to be
 Among the dead ; she withers, like a palm
 Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII.

O leave the palm to wither by itself ;
 Let not quick winter chill its dying hour !
 It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,
 Her brethren, noted the continual shower
 From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,
 Among her kindred, wondered that such dower
 Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
 By one marked out to be a noble's bride.

LVIII

And, furthermore, her brethren wondered much
 Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
 And why it flourished, as by magic touch ;
 Greatly they wondered what the thing might mean :
 They could not surely give belief, that such
 A very nothing would have power to wean

Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX.

Therefore they watched a time when they might sift
This hidden whim; and long they watched in vain;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again;
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX.

Yet they contrived to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place:
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:
The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again. Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

LXI.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethæan, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits of grief, sing not your "Well-a-way!"
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII.

Piteous she looked on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously ;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was ; and why
Twas hid from her : " For cruel 'tis," said she,
" To steal my Basil-pot away from me."

LXIII.

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.
And a sad ditty of this story borne
From mouth to mouth through all the country
passed :
Still is the burden sung—" O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me !"





THE EVE OF ST. AGNES.

I.

ST. AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was !
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
The sculptured dead, on each side, seemed to freeze,
Imprisoned in black, purgatorial rails :
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
 Flattered to tears this aged man and poor ;
 But no—already had his death-bell rung ;
 The joys of all his life were said and sung :
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :
 Another way he went, and soon among
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;
 And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :
 The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
 Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
 With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on
 their breasts.

V.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
 The brain, new stuffed in youth, with triumphs gay
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole thoughted, to one lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
 On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired ; not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere :
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
The hallowed hour was near at hand ; she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with fairy fancy : all amorn,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

P

IX.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things
have been.

X.

He ventures in : let no buzzed whisper tell :
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage : not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI.

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :
He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, " Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place ;
They are all here to-night, the whole bloodthirsty race !

XII.

“Get hence! get hence! there’s dwarfish Hildebrand;
 He had a fever late, and in the fit
 He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land:
 Then there’s that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
 More tame for his grey hairs—Alas me! flit!
 Flit like a ghost away.”—“Ah, gossip dear,
 We’re safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
 And tell me how”——“Good Saints! not here, not
 here:
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.”

XIII.

He followed through a lowly-archèd way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
 And as she muttered, “Well-a—well-a-day!”
 He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 “Now tell me where is Madeline,” said he,
 “O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 When they St. Agnes’ wool are weaving piously.”

XIV.

“St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve—
 Yet men will murder upon holy days:
 Thou must hold water in a witch’s sieve,
 And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
 To venture so: it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes’ Eve!
 God’s help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
 This very night: good angels her deceive!
 But let me laugh awhile, I’ve mickle time to grieve.”

XV.

Feebly she laughèd in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
 Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
 As spectaclèd she sits in chimney-nook.
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose ; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
 Flushing his brow, and in his painèd heart
 Made purple riot ; then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :
 " A cruel man and impious thou art :
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go !—I deem
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

XVII.

" I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
 Quoth Porphyro : " O may I ne'er find grace
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
 Or look with ruffian passion in her face ;
 Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 And beard them, though they be more fanged than
 wolves and bears."

XVIII.

“ Ah ! wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll ;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed.” Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX.

“ It shall be as thou wishest,” said the Dame :
“ All cates and dainties shall be storèd there
Quickly on this feast-night : by the tambour-frame
Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in prayer
The while : Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.”

XXI.

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed ;
The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed, and chaste ;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware :
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
She comes, she comes again, like ringdove frayed and
fled.

XXIII.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died ;
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide ;
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV.

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep damasked wings ;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and
kings.

XXV.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees ;
Uncasps her warmèd jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant bodice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
 Until the poppièd warmth of sleep oppressed
 Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
 Blissfully havened both from joy and pain ;
 Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
 As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
 Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
 And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
 To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breathed himself : then from the closet crept,
 Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
 And over the hushed carpet, silent, stept,
 And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo ! how fast she
 slept.

XXIX.

Then by the bedside, where the faded moon
 Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
 A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :
 O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
 The kettledrum, and far-heard clarionet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :
 The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he forth from the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez ; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

XXXI.

These delicates he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathèd silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.
“ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite :
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

XXXII.

Thus whispering, his warm, unnervèd arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains :—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as icèd stream :
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes ;
So mused awhile, entailed in woofed fantasies.

XXXIII.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute—
 Tumultuous—and, in chords that tenderest be,
 He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence called, “*La belle dame sans mercy* :”
 Close to her ear touching the melody :
 Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan :
 He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
 Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :
 Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide-awake, the vision of her sleep ;
 There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep,
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;
 Who knelt, with joinèd hands and piteous eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

XXXV.

“ Ah, Porphyro !” said she, “ but even now
 Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear :
 How changed thou art ! how pallid, chill, and drear !
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings dear !
 Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
 For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go !”

XXXVI.

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
 Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet—
 Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII.

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
 " This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline ! "
 'Tis dark : the icèd gusts still rave and beat.
 " No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
 Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.
 Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 Though thou forsakest a deceivèd thing ;
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick, unpruned wing."

XXXVIII.

" My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed ?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and quest,
 A famished pilgrim—saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX.

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from fairyland,
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
 Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;
 The bloated wassaillers will never heed:
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see—
 Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
 Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL.

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around,
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
 The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
 Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
 Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
 Where lay the porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flagon by his side:
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII.

And they are gone ; ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform ;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept amongst his ashes cold.





ROBIN HOOD.

TO A FRIEND.

NO! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and grey,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years!
Many times have winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivory shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amazed to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars to light you,
Or the polar ray to right you;

But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold ;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent ;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din ;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn ;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the "grenè shawe ;"
All are gone away and past !
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfèd grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze :
He would swear ; for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas ;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange ! that honey
Can't be got without hard money !

So it is : yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bowstring !
Honour to the bugle-horn !
Honour to the woods unshorn !
Honour to the Lincoln green !
Honour to the archer keen !

Honour to tight little John,
 And the horse he rode upon !
 Honour to bold Robin Hood,
 Sleeping in the underwood !
 Honour to maid Marian,
 And to all the Sherwood-clan !
 Though their days have hurried by
 Let us two a burden try.

LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN.*

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?
 Have ye tippled drink more fine
 Than mine host's canary wine ?
 Or are fruits of Paradise
 Sweeter than those dainty pies
 Of venison ? O generous food !
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood
 Would, with his maid Marian,
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
 Mine host's signboard flew away,
 Nobody knew whither, till
 An astrologer's old quill
 To a sheepskin gave the story—
 Said he saw you in your glory,

* The place frequented by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and the poets of the Elizabethan age.

Underneath a new old-sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCY.

AH ! what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering ?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Ah ! what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone ?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever-dew ;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a fairy's child ;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long ;
 For sideways would she lean and sing
 A fairy's song.

I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone ;
 She looked at me as she did love,
 And made sweet moan.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
 And honey wild, and manna-dew ;
 And sure in language strange she said,
 I love thee true.

She took me to her elfin grot,
 And there she gazed and sighèd deep ;
 And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
 So kissed to sleep.

And there we slumbered on the moss,
 And there I dreamed, ah ! woe betide,
 The latest dream I ever dreamed,
 On the cold hill-side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
 Pale warriors—death-pale were they all ;
 Who cried, “ La Belle Dame Sans Mercy
 Hath thee in thrall ! ”

I saw their starved lips in the gloom,
 With horrid warning gapèd wide ;
 And I awoke, and found me here
 On the cold hill-side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
 Alone and palely loitering :
 Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
 And no birds sing.

STANZAS.

IN a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy tree !
 Thy branches ne'er remember
 Their green felicity ;
 The north cannot undo them
 With a sleepy whistle through them,
 Nor frozen thawings glue them
 From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy brook !
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember
 Apollo's summer look ;
 But, with a sweet forgetting,
 They stay their crystal fretting,
 Never, never petting
 About the frozen time.

Ah ! would 'twere so with many
 A gentle girl and boy !
 But were there ever any
 Writhed not at passed joy ?
 To know the change and feel it,
 When there is none to heal it,
 Nor numb'd sense to steal it,
 Was never said in rhyme.



HYPERION.

A FRAGMENT.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS POEM.

IF any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of "Hyperion," the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to have been of equal length with "Endymion," but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding.

Fleet Street, *June* 26, 1820.

BOOK I.

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery-noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair ;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,

Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large footmarks went,
No further than to where his feet had strayed,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unscptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
While his bowed head seemed list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seemed no force could wake him from his
place ;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touched his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was the Goddess of the infant world ;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height : she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
Or with a finger stayed Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestalled haply in a palace court,
When sages looked to Egypt for their lore.
But oh ! how unlike marble was that face !
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self !
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun ;

As if the vanward clouds of evil days
 Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
 Was with its storèd thunder labouring up.
 One hand she pressed upon that aching spot
 Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
 Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain :
 The other upon Saturn's bended neck
 She laid, and to the level of his ear
 Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
 In solemn tenour and deep organ tone :
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in these like accents—O how frail
 To that large utterance of the early Gods !
 " Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old
 King ?

I have no comfort for thee, no, not one :
 I cannot say, ' O wherefore sleepest thou ?'
 For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;
 And ocean, too, with all its solemn noise,
 Has from thy sceptre passed ; and all the air
 Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
 Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
 Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;
 And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
 Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
 O aching time ! O moments big as years !
 All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
 And press it so upon our weary griefs
 That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
 Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I
 Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude ?
 Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ?
 Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep ! "

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
So came these words and went ; the while in tears
She touched her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet ;
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair-kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :
" O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;
Look up, and let me see our doom in it :
Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
Is Saturn's : tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
Of Saturn ; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
Naked and bare of its great diadem,
Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
To make me desolate ? whence came the strength ?
How was it nurtured to such bursting forth,
While Fate seemed strangled in my nervous grasp ?

But it is so ; and I am smothered up,
 And buried from all godlike exercise
 Of influence benign on planets pale,
 Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
 Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
 And all those acts which Deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in. I am gone
 Away from my own bosom : I have left
 My strong identity, my real self,
 Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
 Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search !
 Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
 Upon all space : space starred, and lorn of light ;
 Space regioned with life-air ; and barren void ;
 Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.
 Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest
 A certain shape or shadow, making way
 With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
 A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must
 Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
 Yes, there must be a golden victory ;
 There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
 Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
 Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
 Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
 Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be
 Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
 Of the sky-children ; I will give command :
 Thea ! Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn ? ”

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
 And made his hands to struggle in the air,
 His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
 His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.

He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep ;
 A little time, and then again he snatched
 Utterance thus : " But cannot I create ?
 Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth
 Another world, another universe,
 To overbear and crumble this to naught ?
 Where is another chaos ? Where ? "—That word
 Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
 The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
 And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
 As thus she quick-voiced spake, yet full of awe :

" This cheers our fallen house : come to our friends,
 O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart ;
 I know the covert, for thence came I hither."
 Thus brief ; then with beseeching eyes she went
 With backward footing through the shade a space :
 He followed, and she turned to lead the way
 Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
 Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
 More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
 Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe :
 The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
 Groaned for the old allegiance once more,
 And listened in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
 But one of the old mammoth-brood still kept
 His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty ;
 Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
 Still sat, still snuffed the incense, teeming up
 From man to the sun's God ; yet unsecure :
 For as among us mortals omens drear
 Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
 Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,

Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp ;
But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastioned with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touched with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flushed angerly : while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darkened the place ; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breathed aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :
And so, when harboured in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paced away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;
While far within each aisle and deep recess
His wingèd minions in close clusters stood,
Amazed and full of fear ; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west :
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope

In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies ;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He entered, but he entered full of wrath ;
His flaming robes streamed out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scared away the meek ethereal Hours,
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathèd light,
And diamond-pavèd lustrous long arcades,
Until he reached the great main cupola ;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamp't his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarred his own golden region ; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceased,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result : " O dreams of day and night !
O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !
O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools !
Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new ?
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,

Of all my lucent empire ? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady visions come to domineer,
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.
Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !
Over the fiery frontier of my realms
I will advance a terrible right arm
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
And bid old Saturn take his throne again.”
He spake, and ceased, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out “ Hush ! ”
So at Hyperion’s words the Phantoms pale
Bestirred themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;
And from the mirrored level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convulsed
From over-strained might. Released, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breathed fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Cleared them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean’s chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
Not therefore veiled quite, blidfold and hid,

But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belted colure,
Glowed through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries :
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled. Two wings this orb
Possessed for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach :
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspread were ;
While still the dazzling globe maintained eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
The sacred seasons might not be disturbed.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stayed in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
Opened upon the dusk demesnes of night ;
And the bright Titan, frenzied with new woes,
Unused to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretched himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Looked down on him with pity, and the voice

Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whispered low and solemn in his ear :
“ O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder how they came and whence ;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct and visible ; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffused unseen throughout eternal space :
Of these new-formed art thou, oh, brightest child
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses !
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne !
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head !
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom ? vague fear there is :
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturbed,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye lived and ruled :
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath ;
Actions of rage and passion ; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God ;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;

My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail :
But thou canst. Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth !
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.”
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curvèd lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceased ; and still he kept them wide :
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stooped over the airy shore,
And plunged all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK II.

Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gained with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourned.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seemed
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,

Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;
And thus in thousand hugest fantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborned with iron. All were not assembled ;
Some chained in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;
Dungeoned in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
Locked up like veins of metal, cramp and screwed ;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed
With sanguine, feverous, boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;
Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear,
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one ; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shattered rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iäpetus another ; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue

Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurled length
Dead ; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain ; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons :
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory ;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,
Upon his elbow raised, all prostrate else,
Shadowed Enceladus ; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads ;
Now tiger-passioned, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delayed, that scared the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Nor far hence Atlas : and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobbed Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
No shape distinguishable, more than when

Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds :
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chant
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climbed
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appeared, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease :
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fixed her eye on Saturn's face :
There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate
Had poured a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison ; so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fevered more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;
So Saturn, as he walked into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted—
“Titans, behold your God !” at which some groaned ;
Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
Some wept, some wailed, all bowed with reverence ;

And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Showed her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eyebrows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines ;
Which, when it ceases in this mountained world,
No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,
Among those fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinned air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up : " Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
Not in the legends of the first of days,
Studied from that old spirit-leavèd book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Saved from the shores of darkness, when the waves
Low-ebbed still hid it up in shallow gloom ;
And the which book ye know I ever kept
For my firm-based footstool :—Ah, infirm !
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire—
At war, at peace, or inter-quarrelling
One against one, or two, or three, or all,
Each several one against the other three,
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath

Unhinges the poor world—not in that strife,
 Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
 Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
 No, nowhere can unriddle, though I search,
 And pore on Nature's universal scroll
 Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
 The first-born of all shaped and palpable Gods,
 Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
 Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here, [here !
 O'erwhelmed, and spurned, and battered, ye are
 O Titans, shall I say 'Arise?'—Ye groan :
 Shall I say 'Crouch!'—Ye groan. What can I
 then ?

O Heaven wide ! O unseen parent dear !
 What can I ? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
 How we can war, how engine our great wrath !
 O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
 Is all a-hungred. Thou, Oceanus,
 Ponderest high and deep ; and in thy face
 I see, astonished, that severe content
 Which comes of thought and musing : give us help !”

So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
 Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
 But cogitation in his watery shades,
 Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
 In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
 Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands :
 “O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-stung,
 Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !
 Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
 My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
 Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
 How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :

And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first-fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touched
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :
Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain ;
O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs :
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life ;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,

A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness : nor are we
Thereby more conquered, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
And feedeth still, more comely than itself ?
Can it deny the chieftom of green groves ?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys ?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof ; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might :
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor ? Have ye seen his face ?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foamed along
By noble wingèd creatures he hath made ?
I saw him on the calmèd waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire : farewell sad I took,
And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye ; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.
Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

Whether through posed conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus

Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell ?
But so it was, none answered for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene ;
And yet she answered not, only complained,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce :
“ O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
There to remain for ever, as I fear :
I would not bode of evil, if I thought
So weak a creature could turn off the help
Which by just right should come of mighty Gods ;
Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
And know that we had parted from all hope.
I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
Where a sweet clime was breathèd from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide, and to reproach that solitude
With songs of misery, music of our woes :
And sat me down, and took a mouthèd shell
And murmured into it, and made melody—
O melody no more ! for while I sang,
And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
Just opposite, an island of the sea,
There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave filled it, as my sense was filled

With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl-beads dropping sudden from their string ;
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music winged instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
And still it cried, ' Apollo ! young Apollo !
The morning-bright Apollo : young Apollo !'
I fled, it followed me, and cried ' Apollo !'
O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
Those pains of mine ; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
Ye would not call this too indulgèd tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

So far her voice flowed on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea : but sea it met,
And shuddered ; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallowed it in wrath :
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He leaned ; not rising, from supreme contempt :
" Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
Or to the over-foolish giant, Gods ?
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all

That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,
Could agonise me more than baby-words
In midst of this dethronement horrible.
Speak ! roar ! shout ! yell ! ye sleepy Titans all.
Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile ?
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm ?
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
Thy scalding in the seas ? What, have I roused
Your spleens with so few simple words as these ?
O joy ! for now I see ye are not lost ;
O joy ! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide glaring for revenge !"—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus :
“ Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies ;
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done ;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms :
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled ;
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak :
That was before our brows were taught to frown,
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds ;
That was before we knew the wingèd thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here ! ”

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern :
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He looked upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remained,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams :
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion :—a granite peak
His bright feet touched, and there he stayed to view
The misery his brilliance had betrayed
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East :
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He uttered, while his hands contemplative
He pressed together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seized again the fallen Gods

At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light :
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood ; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, " Saturn !"
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of " Saturn !"

BOOK III.

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace
Amazèd were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse ! O leave them to their woes ;
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire :
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse ! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ;
For lo ! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush everything that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose grow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn

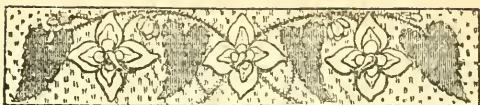
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills ;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well ; let faint-lipped shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths ; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surprised.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemmed beneath the shade :
Apollo is once more the golden theme !
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers ?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceased, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retirèd cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listened, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some ousmbrous boughs hard-by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplexed, the while melediously he said :
“ How can'st thou over the unfooted sea ?

Or hath that antique mien and robèd form
Moved in these vales invisible till now ?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper passed.
Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dreamed."—" Yes," said the supreme shape,
" Thou hast dreamed of me ; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touched by thy fingers, all the vast
Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listened in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted ? Tell me, youth,
What sorrow thou canst feel : for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear : explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Plucked witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who bath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new born."—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answered, while his white melodious throat
Throbbled with the syllables : " Mnemosyne !
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how ;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest ?

Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs;
And then upon the grass I sit and moan,
Like one who once had wings. O why should I
Feel cursed and thwarted, when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing:
Are there not other regions than this isle?
What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun!
And the most patient brilliance of the moon!
And stars by thousands! Point me out the way
To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will flit into it with my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is power?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless, yet in aching ignorance?
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
That waileth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
Mute thou remainest—Mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine

Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
 And so become immortal."—Thus the God,
 While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
 Beneath his white soft temples, steadfast kept
 Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
 Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs ;
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;
 Or liker still to one who should take leave
 Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
 As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
 Die into life : so young Apollo anguished :
 His very hair, his golden tresses famed
 Kept undulation round his eager neck.
 During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
 Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
 Apollo shrieked ;—and lo ! from all his limbs
 Celestial * * * * *
 * * * * *





O D E S.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

I.

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness—
That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II.

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth.
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stainèd mouth ;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim ;

III.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs,
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

IV.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
 Already with thee ! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays ;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
 ways.

V.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 S

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
 Fast fading violets covered up in leaves ;
 And mid-May's eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

VI.

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy !
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn.

VIII.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades :
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
 Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ?

 ODE ON A GRECIAN URN.

I.

THOU still unravished bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?
 What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?
 What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
 What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?

II.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on :

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone !
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
 Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

III.

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor over bid the spring adieu ;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new ;
 More happy love ! more happy, happy love !
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting, and for ever young ;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Leadest thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
 What little town by river or sea-shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

V.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou sayest,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

ODE TO PSYCHE.

○ GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft-conchèd ear:
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
 The wingèd Psyche with awakened eyes?
 I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing on the budded grass;
 Their arms embracèd, and their pinions too;
 Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu,

As if disjointed by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of Aureorean love :
 The wingèd boy I knew ;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
 His Psyche true !

O latest born and loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !
 Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-regioned star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
 Nor altar heaped with flowers ;
 Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
 Upon the midnight hours ;
 No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
 From chain-swung censer teeming ;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
 Yet even in these days so far retired
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
 I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
 Upon the midnight hours ;
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swung censer teeming ;
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
 Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant
 pain,
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :
 Far, far around shall those dark clustered trees
 Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep ;
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lulled to sleep ;
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same ;
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight
 That shadowy thought can win,
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in !

FANCY.

EVER let the Fancy roam,
 Pleasure never is at home :
 At a touch sweet pleasure melteth,
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;
 Then let wingèd Fancy wander
 Through the thought still spread beyond her :
 Open wide the mind's cage-door,
 She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
 O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
 Summer's joys are spoilt by use,

And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming ;
Autumn's red-lipped fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting : What do then ?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night ;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the cakèd snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overawed,
Fancy, high-commissioned :—send her !
She has vassals to attend her :
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather ;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray ;
All the heapèd Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth :
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear ;
Rustle of the reapèd corn ;
Sweet birds antheming the morn :
And, in the same moment—hark !
'Tis the early April lark,

Or the rooks, with busy caw,
 Foraging for sticks and straw :
 Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
 The daisy and the marigold ;
 White-plumed lilies, and the first
 Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;
 Shaded hyacinth, alway
 Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;
 And every leaf, and every flower
 Pearlèd with the self-same shower.
 Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
 Meagre from its cellèd sleep ;
 And the snake all winter-thin
 Cast on sunny bank its skin ;
 Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
 Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
 When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
 Quiet on her mossy nest ;
 Then the hurry and alarm
 When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;
 Acorns ripe down-pattering,
 While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
 Everything is spoilt by use :
 Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
 Too much gazed at ? Where's the maid
 Whose lip mature is ever new ?
 Where's the eye, however blue,
 Doth not weary ? Where's the face
 One would meet in every place ?
 Where's the voice, however soft
 One would hear so very oft ?

At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
 Let, then, wingèd Fancy find
 Thee a mistress to thy mind :
 Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
 Ere the God of Torment taught her
 How to frown and how to chide ;
 With a waist and with a side
 White as Hebe's, when her zone
 Slipt its golden clasp, and down
 Fell her kirtle to her feet,
 While she held the goblet sweet,
 And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
 Of the Fancy's silken leash ;
 Quickly break her prison-string,
 And such joys as these she'll bring.
 Let the wingèd Fancy roam,
 Pleasure never is at home.

 O D E.

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new ?
 Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the spheres of sun and moon ;
 With the noise of fountains wondrous,
 And the parle of voices thund'rous ;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease

Seated on Elysian lawns
Browsed by none but Dian's fawns ;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not ;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, trancèd thing,
But divine melodious truth ;
Philosophic numbers smooth ;
Tales and golden histories
Of Heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again ;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumbered, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week ;
Of their sorrows and delights ;
Of their passions and their spites ;
Of their glory and their shame ;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth !
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new !

TO AUTUMN.

I.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

II.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers :
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last ooziings hours by hours.

III.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too—
 While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
 Hedge-crickets sing ; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden croft ;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY.

I.

NO, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine ;
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

II.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
 Or on the wealth of globèd peonies ;

Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Imprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

III.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips ;
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
 tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.





LAMIA.

PART I.

UPON a time, before the fairy broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous
woods,
Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipped lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete,
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt ;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they withered and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometimes she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlocked to choose.

Ah, what a world of love was at her feet !
 So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
 Burnt from his wingèd heels to either ear,
 That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
 Blushed into roses 'mid his golden hair,
 Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare
 From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
 Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
 And wound with many a river to its head,
 To find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret
 bed :

In vain ; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
 And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
 Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
 Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
 There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
 Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
 All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake :
 “ When from this wreathèd tomb shall I awake !
 When move in a sweet body fit for life,
 And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
 Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me ! ”
 The God, dove-footed, glided silently
 Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
 The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
 Until he found a palpitating snake,
 Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
 Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;
 Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
 Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred ;
 And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
 Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed

Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
 So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
 She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
 Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
 Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
 Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :
 Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !
 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete :
 And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?
 As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
 Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
 Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
 And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
 Like a stooped falcon ere he takes his prey :

" Fair Hermes, crowned with feathers, fluttering
 light,
 I had a splendid dream of thee last night :
 I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
 Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
 The only sad one ; for thou didst not hear
 The soft, lute-fingered Muses chanting clear,
 Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
 Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious
 moan.

I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
 Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
 And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,
 Strike for the Cretan isle ; and here thou art !
 Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid ?"
 Whereat the star of Lethe not delayed
 His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :
 " Thou smooth-lipped serpent, surely high inspired !

Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
 Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
 Telling me only where my nymph is fled—
 Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou
 hast said,"

Returned the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
 "I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
 And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
 Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
 Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
 "Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine.
 Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
 About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
 She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
 Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
 From weary tendrils, and bowed branches green,
 She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
 And by my power is her beauty veiled
 To keep it unaffronted, unassailed
 By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
 Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bleared Silenus' sighs.
 Pale grew her immortality, for woe
 Of all these lovers, and she grievèd so
 I took compassion on her, bade her steep
 Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
 Her loveliness invisible, yet free
 To wander as she loves, in liberty.
 Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
 If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
 Then, once again, the charmed God began
 An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
 Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
 Ravished, she lifted her Circean head,
 Blushed a live damask, and swift-lipping said:

“ I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss !
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
Stoop Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.”
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream ; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flushed moment, hovering, it might seem
Dashed by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burned ;
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turned
To the swooned serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean charm.
So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept : she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cowered, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour :
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids opened bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloomed, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew ;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change ; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Withered at dew so sweet and virulent ;

Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear,
 Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
 Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one
 cooling tear,
 The colours all inflamed throughout her train,
 She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain ;
 A deep volcanian yellow took the place
 Of all her milder-moonèd body's grace ;
 And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede ;
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks, and bars,
 Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars :
 So that, in moments few, she was undrest
 Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
 And rubious-argent ; of all these bereft,
 Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
 Still shone her crown ; that vanished, also she
 Melted and disappeared as suddenly ;
 And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
 Cried, " Lycius ! gentle Lycius ! "—Borne aloft
 With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
 These words dissolved : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
 A full-born beauty new and exquisite ?
 She fled into that valley they pass o'er
 Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ;
 And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
 The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
 And of that other ridge whose barren back
 Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
 South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
 About a young bird's flutter from a wood,

Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
 By a clear pool, wherein she passionèd
 To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
 While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
 More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
 Or sighed, or blushed, or on spring-flowerèd lea
 Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy :
 A virgin purest lipped; yet in the lore
 Of love deep learned to the red heart's core :
 Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
 To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain ;
 Define their pettish limits, and estrange
 Their points of contact, and swift counterchange ;
 Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
 Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art ;
 As though in Cupid's college she had spent
 Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
 And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairly
 By the wayside to linger, we shall see :
 But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
 And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
 Of all she list, strange or magnificent :
 How, ever, where she willed, her spirit went ;
 Whether to faint Elysium, or where
 Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
 Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair ;
 Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
 Stretched out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine ;
 Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
 Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.

And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend ;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove, with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore ; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchored ; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare
Jove heard his vows, and bettered his desire ;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk :
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His fantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calmed twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green ;
So neighboured to him, and yet so unseen
She stood : he passed, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapped like his mantle, while her eyes
Followed his steps, and her neck regal white
Turned—syllabing thus, “ Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone ?
Lycius, look back ! and be some pity shown.”

He did ; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice ;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seemed he had loved them a whole summer long :
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore ;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure :
“ Leave thee alone ! Look back ! Ah ! Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee !
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
Stay ! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay !
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey :
Stay ! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
Alone they can drink up the morning rain :
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in time
Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?
So sweetly to these ravished ears of mine
Came thy swift greeting, that if thou should'st fade
Thy memory will waste me to a shade :
For pity do not melt ! ”—“ If I should stay,”
Said Lamia, “ here upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice remembrance of my home ?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales where no joy is—
Empty of immortality and bliss !
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below

In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth,
 What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
 My essence ? What serener palaces,
 Where I may all my many senses please,
 And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts ap-
 pease ?

It cannot be—Adieu !” So said, she rose
 Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
 The amorous promise of her lone complain,
 Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
 The cruel lady, without any show
 Of sorrow for her tender favourite’s woe,
 But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
 With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
 Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
 The life she had so tangled in her mesh :
 And as he from one trance was waking
 Into another, she began to sing,
 Happy in beauty, life, and love, and everything,
 A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
 While, like held breath, the stars drew in their
 panting fires.

And then she whispered in such trembling tone,
 As those who, safe together, met alone
 For the first time through many anguished days,
 Use other speech than looks : bidding him raise
 His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
 For that she was a woman, and without
 Any more subtle fluid in her veins
 Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
 Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
 And next she wondered how his eyes could miss
 Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
 She dwelt but half retired, and there had led

Days happy as the gold coin could invent
 Without the aid of love ; yet in content
 Till she saw him, as once she passed him by,
 Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
 At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heaped
 Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reaped
 Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
 The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more,
 But wept alone those days, for why should she
 adore ?

Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
 To see her still, and singing so sweet lays ;
 Then from amaze into delight he fell
 To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;
 And every word she spake enticed him on
 To unperplexed delight and pleasure known.
 Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
 Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,
 There is not such a treat among them all,
 Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
 As a real woman, lineal indeed
 From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
 Thus gentle Lamia judged, and judged aright,
 That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
 So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
 More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
 With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
 That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
 Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
 Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh ;
 And last, pointing to Corinth, asked her sweet,
 If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
 The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
 Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease

To a few paces ; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.
They passed the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Muttered, like tempest in the distance brewed,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companioned or alone ; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them clustered in the corniced shade
Of some arched temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he pressed hard, as one came near
With curled grey beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald
crown,

Slow-stepped, and robed in philosophic gown :
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and passed,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled : " Ah," said he,
" Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully ?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew ?"
" I'm wearied," said fair Lamia : " tell me who
Is that old man ? I cannot bring to mind
His features :—Lycius ! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes ?" Lycius replied,
" 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide

And good instructor ; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillared porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbèd steps below,
Mild as a star in water ; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touched there. Sounds Æolian
Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets. None knew where
They could inhabit ; the most curious
Were foiled, who watched to trace them to their house ;
And but the flitter-wingèd verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II.

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us !—cinders, ashes, dust ;
Love in a palace is, perhaps, at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast :
That is a doubtful tale from fairyland,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.

Had Lycius lived to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clenched it quite ; but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice
hiss.

Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hovered and buzzed his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin : side by side
They were enthronèd, in the even-tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveiled the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts :—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost
slept ;

When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallows' twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harboured in
That purple-linèd palace of sweet sin,
His spirit passed beyond its golden bourne
Into the noisy world almost foresworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys : and she began to moan and sigh

Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whispered he :
"Why do you think?" returned she tenderly :
"You have deserted me ; where am I now ?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow :
No, no, you have dismissed me ; and I go
From your breast houseless : ay, it must be so."
He answered, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirrored small in paradise :
"My silver planet, both of eve and morn !
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart ?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose ?
Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
My thoughts ! shall I unveil them ? Listen then !
What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abashed withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the throng'd streets your bridal car
Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's cheek
Trembled ; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words ; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim ;

Besides, for all his love, in self-despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent ! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth—
“Suresome sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
I have not asked it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame ?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the citted earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth ?”
“I have no friends,” said Lamia, “no, not one ;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known ;
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list invite your many guests ;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.”
Lycius, perplexed at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry ; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep ; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betrayed.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veiled, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants : but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin),
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched
grace.

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the fairy-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride :
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branched one to one
All down the aisled place : and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to
wall.

So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Missioned her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.

Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
 Came jasper panels ; then, anon, there burst
 Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
 And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
 Approving all, she faded at self-will,
 And shut the chamber up, close, hushed, and still,
 Complete and ready for the revels rude,
 When dreadful guests would come to spoil her
 solitude.

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
 O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout
 The silent-blessing fate, warm cloistered hours,
 And show to common eyes these secret bowers !
 The herd approached ; each guest, with busy brain,
 Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
 And entered marvelling : for they knew the street,
 Remembered it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;
 So in they hurried all, mazed, curious, and keen :
 Save one, who looked thereon with eye severe,
 And with calm-planted steps walked in austere ;
 'Twas Apollonius : something too he laughed,
 As though some knotty problem, that had daft
 His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
 And solve, and melt :—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
 His young disciple. " 'Tis no common rule,
 Lycius," said he, " for uninvited guest
 To force himself upon you, and infest
 With unbidden presence the bright throng

Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blushed, and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread ;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Filled with pervading brilliance and perfume :
Before each lucid panel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerved upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets : fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimicked as they rose
Along the mirrored walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast reared
On libbard's* paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Came from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an ante-chamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Poured on his hair, they all moved to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed

* Leopard's.

Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth
could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowelled undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow ;
But when the happy viintage touched their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments :—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear.
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;
Flushed were their cheeks, and bright eyes double
bright :

Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflowered, or forest trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osiered gold were brought
High as the handles heaped, to suit the thought
Of every guest ; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillowed at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia ? What for Lycius ?
What for the sage, Old Apollonius ?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue,
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrus, that his watching eyes may swim

Into forgetfulness ; and for the sage,
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven ;
 We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
 In the dull catalogue of common things.
 Philosophy will clip an angel's wings,
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomèd mine—
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
 The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
 Full brimmed, and opposite sent forth a look
 'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
 From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
 And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
 Had fixed his eye, without a twinkle or stir,
 Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
 Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet
 pride.

Lycius then pressed her hand, with devout touch,
 As pale it lay upon the rosy couch :
 'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins ;
 Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
 Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
 " Lamia, what means this ? Wherefore dost thou
 start ?
 Know'st thou that man ? " Poor Lamia answered not.
 He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot
 Owned they the love-lorn piteous appeal :

More, more he gazed : his human senses reel :
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs ;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
“ Lamia ! ” he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush ; the stately music no more breathes ;
The myrtle sickened in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased ;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seemed a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
“ Lamia ! ” he shrieked ; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
“ Begone, foul dream ! ” he cried, gazing again
In the bride’s face, where now no azure vein
Wandered on fair-spaced temples ; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek ; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessèd vision :—all was blight ;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
“ Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man !
Turn them aside, wretch ! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness ; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long-offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians ! look upon that grey-beard wretch !
Mark how, possessed, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes ! Corinthians, see !
My sweet bride withers at their potency.”
“ Fool ! ” said the sophist, in an undertone

Gruff with contempt ; which a death-nighing moan
 From Lycius answered, as, heart-struck and lost,
 He sat supine beside the aching ghost.
 " Fool ! fool ! " repeated he, while his eyes still
 Relented not, nor moved ; " from every ill
 Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey ? "
 Then Lamia breathed death breath ; the sophist's eye,
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
 Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging : she, as well
 As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
 Motioned him to be silent ; vainly so,
 He looked and looked again a level—No !
 " A Serpent ! " echoed he ; no sooner said,
 Than with a frightful scream she vanished :
 And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
 As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
 On the high couch he lay !—his friends came round—
 Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
 And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.*

* " Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him ; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her awhile to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius ; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia ; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus's gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere

illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece."—BURTON'S *Anatomy of Melancholy*, part 3, sec. 2, memb. 1, subs. 1.



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